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A TRUE TALE OF A CATHEDRAL CITY

LONDON

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The Envoy

THE
GREAT GRUNDY ROMANCE

A True Tale of a Cathedral City

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY JOHN BROWN SMITH

QUID DICET MATRONA GRUNDY? — Unknown Latin Author

LONDON
LOCKWOOD & CO., 7 STATIONERS'-HALL COURT
1864

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED

(WITHOUT PERMISSION)

TO

ALL GRUNDYS

OF ALL AGES AND ALL NATIONS

BY THEIRS

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT

THE EDITOR

Sept. 1863

Gen. Wm. Bay 21 Aug 53 Chaslett

INTRODUCTION.



THE ORIGIN of the great house of GRUNDY has never yet been investigated with the attention which I think its importance deserves. I confess to having a special interest in the matter, as I am nearly connected with several branches of that illustrious family. Nay, start not, gentle reader. You and I are, and shall remain, strangers to each other. Our paths in life are not likely to cross ; therefore you need entertain none of those fears which this avowal might naturally excite ; and I assert my claim to the relationship with becoming modesty, feeling conscious how utterly unworthy I am of the honour of being allied to such an ancient, distinguished, and all-powerful

race. It is true that the first notorious record preserved to us of the family by name, is comparatively of very recent date. I allude to a certain Mistress Grundy, who is said to have exercised such salutary influence over the inhabitants of a whole village, as to have kept them in order by the dread of her word alone. But will any sensible person attempt to dispute the obvious fact of Grundys having existed from ages of remote antiquity? Indeed, it is believed the world could not well get on without them; and it is even asserted that they were a pre-Adamite race, and wondrously escaped entire destruction through the cataclysms beneath which the Megatherium, Megalonyx, and other primeval monsters, were entombed. And again, that an antediluvian tribe would infallibly have become extinct in the universal deluge, had not one infant pair, with precocious sagacity, crept into an opossum's pouch, and thus surreptitiously obtained the preserving shelter of the Ark. These highly interesting speculations, however, I am not prepared either to substantiate

or refute, but leave them to kindred archæologists for investigation. I can only say, that if any fossil relics were shown to me, and incontrovertibly proved to be the remains of any such primeval Grundys, I would most willingly, at my own expense, erect a court at Sydenham, as a meet receptacle for them. But it would require no deep research to establish my theory of the antiquity of this notable race. It is only necessary to recall to mind the history of any country in the known world, throughout every era, to perceive at once innumerable traces of their existence. What but the genius of a Grundy, I would ask, could have originated the system of ostracism which prevailed in Athens and other cities of Greece? And from what other source could we have gained an insight into the domestic histories of so many worthies, who flourished in that country, Egypt, and Rome? It is easy to imagine, also, that they often performed good public services as well; and I confess to entertaining my own private opinion that the geese

celebrated for having saved the last-named republic, on one memorable occasion, were in reality certain cackling Roman Grundys, merely represented allegorically in history as those foolish, noisy fowls. In the annals of our own land, they may be found continually in royal company; for who else could have fomented the numerous matrimonial squabbles of our sovereigns with their consorts, too frequently leading to wars and tumults among nations? And we must be indebted to such powerful minds as theirs alone, for that charming, though now much doubted, story of "The Fair Rosamond;" for, surely, none but Grundys of the highest order would have invested the perhaps passing admiration of King Henry for Miss Rosamond Clifford with such a perfect halo of romance as her labyrinthine abode; the discovery of it by Queen Eleanor; and her tragical end, through her enforced selection between the pleasing alternative of dagger or poison, offered to her by that portly, regal dame. I might bring forward countless examples

of a similar nature, and likewise describe how the many branches of this noted family have spread and multiplied on the face of the earth, but more especially in these favoured isles, till there is scarcely a town or village, in Great Britain, unblest by their noble presence; but I feel that enough has been said to account for the mingled sensations of pride and diffidence with which I claimed so illustrious a race as kinsmen. I was necessitated to make the avowal, by my desire to explain how the following fragment of a romance came into my possession. I found it accidentally in an old bureau, containing some treasured family letters and papers, bequeathed to me, with other property, by a distant relative, a genuine Grundy in the female line, who had adopted me as her heir, through some fortunate caprice. The manuscript is written in bold, manly characters; and, delighted to find my ideas on the subject of this family's greatness and antiquity so entirely corroborated by it, I devoured each word it contained with absorbing eagerness. I do

not hesitate to confess, likewise, that I have read it over and over again since my lucky discovery, pondering well upon its contents, and feeling, if possible, increased interest in each perusal. It seems to me, indeed, that there is a depth of meaning in almost every line, which it requires some reflection fully to appreciate. I can but regret that the descriptions of costume, manners, and customs, given in it are so very vague as to make it impossible to ascertain to what precise period the work refers; nor do the colloquial parts afford any clue to the solution of the mystery; the quaint phraseology used by the speakers now telling of times long past, and then again some passing allusion brings us back to more modern days. The artist who illustrated some of the scenes for me, has adopted for the Grundys the style of dress worn, it may be supposed, by "city gallants" in the earlier part of the present century; but this is merely done through conjecture. I am equally at a loss to decide upon the locality where the

scenes occurred. There are many "Humdrums" in the land, and though the spire of the "left-behind" old city being mentioned might appear to bring any conjectures on the subject within a narrow compass, still it has occurred to me that this, as well as other slight peculiarities in the place, may have been purposely introduced to mislead inquirers as to its identity. That the manuscript has at least been written some years is evident, from the hand of Time being visible in the yellow hue of the paper and faded appearance altogether of its pages. Otherwise, although on the whole it bears the stamp of originality, any one might possibly have thought that most of the descriptive parts must have been stolen from some novel of a celebrated modern writer; and the short peroration, winding up the opening of the first chapter, to be an imitation of the style of another still more talented living author; and, also, that much of the second chapter, so curiously blending the humorous with the ideal, was meant to resemble what may be found in the works of the

most popular tale-writer of our days ; but, as I have already observed, the manifest comparative antiquity of the manuscript effectually disproves the commission of such plagiarisms.

In bringing it before the public, all I desire is, that any reader, whose eye may scan this faithful copy of its pages, may be half as much interested in the perusal as myself, and participate to some degree in the regret which I experienced at its abrupt termination. It is indeed most tantalising to be introduced to two such lovely heroines, and so many worthy gallants, only to lose sight of them again ; especially as I feel assured, that the more we became acquainted with them, the greater would have been our admiration of their high qualities. I am not gifted with sufficient of the inventive Grundy genius to enable me to jump at hasty conclusions, formed upon slender foundations, or I would have attempted to take up the thread of the tale where it is so suddenly broken off, if only through my anxiety to release the hero from his state of durance, and satisfactorily to

elucidate the mystery of "The Stranger." The interruption occurs in the middle of a sentence, at the end of a page, and, connecting this simple fact with the narrative style of the work, it may fairly be surmised that it once boasted a continuation, and the rest of the papers have been lost. I fear there is no chance of recovering them; but should I ever be fortunate enough to meet with the missing treasure, I will not fail to give to the world, without delay or reservation, what would doubtless prove a fitting sequel to this "GREAT GRUNDY ROMANCE."

THE GREAT GRUNDY ROMANCE.

CHAPTER I.

It was in the year —, at the close of one of those glorious days late in autumn, when nature appears to be hesitating to throw off her summer clothing, and put on the sombre, but at the same time graceful, garb of winter. The sun was gradually sinking in the western sky, casting those lights and shadows o'er the scene which nowhere fall so beautifully as in the well-wooded nooks and corners of "merrie England." The air was laden with an odour peculiar to that season of the year, when the leaves, strewn from the half-stripped trees in every shady lane and byway, are blown together in heaps, to rot on the grassy embankments, or trodden down on the moist ground, emit a woody scent, which, mixing with that of the fresh-turned earth and rank vegetation, tends to awaken in the mind of the

musings wayfarer pleasing thoughts of the Past and hopeful visions for the Future. The birds were warbling their sweet evening carol before betaking themselves to repose; the lively hedge-sparrow, skipping from bough to bough, was calling for the last time her restless mate; and the swift-winged blackbird, with his "shattered" notes, seemed to be summoning the straying feathered songsters of the grove to attend to the lullaby of the cooing wood-pigeon. A colony of rooks, uttering their low-toned, monotonous cries, floated calmly away over the undulating landscape to their home in an adjacent park; a strange contrast to their kinsmen, the wily jackdaws, who in endless gyrations coquetted round the steeple of some village church ere finally seeking their dormitories in its crumbling walls. The lowing kine could occasionally be heard in the damp meadows, inviting the attendance of the tardy milkmaid or truant urchin to drive them to their warm quarters at the farm. The gentle bleatings of a flock of sheep folded near came soothingly through the still air, and served as a sort of sustained accompaniment to the sharp, fitful bark of the watch-dog, which chimed in pleasantly with the other softer sounds, as suggesting thoughts of the comfort and security of the household over which he was the guardian. The solitary hind was wending his way to his humble dwelling after a long day of hardy toil, regardless of

nature's beauties, but rather cogitating upon the welcome ideas of the coarse fare and sound sleep he would soon enjoy, to appease his keen appetite and recruit his strength, though only to fit him for renewed labours on the morrow. Gradually the windows of the cottages scattered over the surrounding country began thus early to be lighted up by the cheerful, ruddy flame of the hearth-fires, carefully tended by thrifty housewives anxious for the return of their toilworn helpmates. Here and there a casement gave forth brighter scintillations than the rest, like some superior star in the firmament, but here showing the presence of an additional artificial aid, and likewise indicating the superior wealth and position of the owners. At the various small hostelries along the road, the oracles of the neighbourhood and many of the yet unmated hinds were already congregating in the half kitchen, half public-room, where, lolling heavily on the settles in the wide chimney corners, or dispersed over the room, they lazily stretched their sturdy limbs, and discoursed with stolid simplicity upon parish — ay, and also upon national affairs. The rotund form of the landlord showed conspicuously among them as he moved about, duly sensible of his own importance, even when almost obsequiously awaiting the orders of his tired and thirsty customers; while, as dusk came on, the huge fire in the grate shed its flickering light on the assemblage, casting their long

shadows, in Rembrandt-like darkness, upon the brick floor or naked walls around. Now abruptly enters at the door a love-sick swain with flushed and jocund face, his promise of future happiness but just sealed on the rosy lips of his lowly rustick maid. He looks with beaming eyes at the full froth-mouthed flagon, just filled and being carried by the host to a clamorous guest—to him a lesser paradise, compared with that to which he now looks forward—the peaceful contentment of his honest heart unconsciously betraying a sympathy with the tranquillity and charm of the low-hushed atmosphere without. Presently the stillness is broken by the approach of the heavily-laden waggon, the harsh grating of the wheels, as they grind the obstinate earth, mingling with the tramp of the steeds, the jingling of the harness, and the cheery crack of the waggoner's whip. Then comes the sudden halt of the team, to permit the driver as well as his cattle to quaff the well-earned draught; and again, the hasty call, the noisy start, and the sound of the retreating vehicle is heard, falling fainter and fainter on the listening ear till lost in the distance: the whole combining to impart that quietude yet cheerfulness to the spirit, so grateful to those weighed down by worldly care and strife. In truth, a scene like this, acting upon memory's stage in the maturer years of life, carries back the dreamer to his youthful days, when, as it were,

walking with a blank page in the one hand, and the pencil of romance in the other, he lived in its reality, —the pearl, Youth, at his feet; the diamond, Hope, within his grasp. A great chasm—lo! the page is blotted and smeared from top to bottom, the pearl soiled and crushed, then gone, the diamond lost: ashes are in his hand, a blank for his Future, and nothing left of the Past but a banquet of unalloyed regrets.

It was then in the year —, towards sunset upon such an evening, and in a locality where sights and sounds were rife like those we have faintly endeavoured to describe, that on the road leading from a suburb of an ancient city in one of the maritime counties of England, there might have been seen two gallants slowly pacing along side by side, in profound silence and with grave deportment, as if bent upon some matter of moment. One of them was in the heyday of youth, not having to all appearance completed twenty-five summers. A thin, light-brown moustache, abruptly twisting upwards at the points, adorned his Hyperion lip, forming a graceful link between the full lower one, overhung by the perhaps too prominent upper teeth, and the short, small, flat nose above. But the openness of his countenance would at once have redeemed the defects—if they might be called so—in these features, had not this again been neutralised by a certain width

between the eyes, and general vacancy in their expression, puzzling an observer to decide whether the *tout ensemble* of his physiognomy betokened absence of mind or deep thought, good nature or stupidity. He was very tall, and of stalwart, symmetrical build, except that he showed a slight unsteadiness in the lower limbs, and also a bulk somewhat in advance of his years, most probably brought on by a too great indulgence in youthful excesses in his father's halls : nevertheless, with these trifling drawbacks, his step was jaunty and his movements light. His companion had many years the advantage of him, looking perhaps older than he really was, partly through exposure to the weather, and partly from the stimulants of strong waters, evidenced by his nasal organ, of a coppery, roseate hue. Be that as it may, his originally sandy-coloured hair, something beyond the point of beginning to turn grey, vouched for his having reached, if he had not already passed, the meridian of life. His long upper lip and part of his chin were closely shaven, but around his lower jaw and underneath it a luxuriant crop of wiry, tawny grey hair flourished, imparting to his satyrlike visage a curiously blended look of the lion and the goat, with a flash of the fox in the cunning and inquisitive expression of his small, quick eyes. In stature he was below the middle height, and showed much more flesh than bone or muscle in his frame ; and he looked only the more

undersized from this tendency to puffiness, and through the contrast he formed to his lengthy young companion. He had a somewhat rolling walk, until, as if struck by some sudden thought, he would quicken his pace and step with a kind of knowing strut, looking sharply and stealthily to each side of the road, and then, as if again feeling a sense of security coming over him, he would relapse into his usual and more natural gait. The dress of this individual was in accordance with the costume of the period. His hat was neither good, nor could it be called bad; his upper garments, if they had been of more recent date, would have had a newer and fresher appearance; and his nether would, in all probability, have been the same. He was shod in a pair of stout, roomy boots, of untanned leather, reaching about mid-calf, but worn under his lower garment; they were only visible where they confined the feet, though the upper parts might be plainly traced by a certain bulging out of his leg habiliments till terminating half-way up the limb, as already mentioned. We applied the term "stout" to the boots: we ought rather to have said they had once been strong and goodly enough, but now, as if the wearer were used to much walking in his vocation, a considerable amount of wear and tear had sensibly damaged whatever shape, make, and thickness, they might whilom have boasted. The garments of the younger pedestrian were of the same description as those

of his companion, but of more modern cut, and on his head he wore a cap of rich blue velvet; and, if the eye wandered to his lower man, it could easily be perceived that he had much vanity in the fashion of his boots. They were of far more dainty form than those of his friend, reaching only to the ankle, round which they were so tightly fastened as to give his feet a swelling, bursting look. They were firmly laced in front by a silken cord, passing through two close even rows of brass eyelet holes most pleasing to the sight, and then the lace, crossed at the top, fell with elegant brazen-tagged ends half-way down before. As he paced along, frequent had been his proud glances of approval upon them, though at the same time these were strangely tempered by some hidden cause for anguish, shortly explained, by the exclamation with which he broke the long silence, as arising from elegance rather than ease having been consulted in their construction.

“The curse of St. Hildebrand upon the son of Crispin who fashioned these boots!” cried the youth, drawing up first one leg from the ground and then the other. “His ill-starred hand has so contrived them, that they do press upon my corns most sorely; the pain would sour the sweetest temper in Christendom.”

“Thou shouldst be less nice about thy foot gear,” answered the elder gallant. “When thou hast arrived at my years and experience, thou wilt have grown wiser

and adopted a more useful covering for thy feet," he continued, lifting up one of his lower extremities, and regarding the stumpy boot upon it with affectionate interest. "But were I so plagued, when next I wended my way into the city I would give the unlucky varlet a stout buffet with the back of my closed hand, as a set-off for my sufferings. These caitiffs are getting unruly; the times are out of joint: gentlemen of our degree cannot be served as they were formerly, and although the rascals are not strong in the mass, yet, by my halidom, they insult and plague us in their burgher-like way as often as they list."

"By my ladye-love!—and that is swearing a merry oath on a grave subject," quoth he of the tight boot, at the same time casting a glance of mingled compassion and contempt on the ill-shod foot of his companion, "a good sack o' the town by us gallants, if we carried off every pair of shoes in the place, would be excellent medicine for these greasy citizens, and teach them better manners for the future." The latter word was jerked out between the closed teeth of the young speaker, as again a sudden twinge changed the character of his thoughts, and he almost wished for the moment his feet were encased in the comfortable, though worn and shapeless, boots of his friend.

"And yet," returned the other with his fox-like look, "I swear by the memory of our great ancestress, Dis-

sension Yapp, if report speak true, there's a certain building, containing a damsel with a pair of bright eyes, belonging to one of these same citizens — and he, i' faith, if I mistake not, a worthy member of St. Crispin's guild — which would escape the general sack, if young Toby Grundy happened to be in the onslaught."

The young man reddened to the tips of his ears at this home thrust, and hesitated to reply; but suddenly glancing at his companion, whose gaze was now fixed on vacancy, he sought to turn the discourse from any further allusion to an object held sacred in his heart, by observing, "Cousin Cackle, thou didst mention the name of Dissension Yapp in thy converse. Thou hast scarcely given her all her honours: she was canonised by one of the popes, wasn't she?"

"Thou hast an inquiring mind, lad, and art well disposed," answered he addressed as Cackle, "and 'tis almost time thou shouldst be thoroughly informed of our family annals; but in this matter thou hast been deceived, Tobias, if thou wert ever told that Dissension was elevated to the saintship."

"Then she never was?" questioned Tobias.

"No, but she was very near it," said Cackle in a low voice.

"If it wouldn't plague thee, cousin, and occupy too much of thy time, I should be glad to learn how such

an honour was lost to our house;" saying which, the youthful Toby disposed his countenance to the seriousness adapted to such an important subject.

"Well, lad, I'll tell thee," returned Cackle, slightly elevating his voice, and giving a short sharp cough to clear his throat. "It is a history, the minute particulars of which I have been at some pains to learn. It was in this wise. At the time of the election of one of the popes (I think 'twas Urban the Second), Dissension was lady-abbess of some convent in Bohemia—it matters not precisely where—and the envoy bearing the proxy of Henry the Fourth, Emperor of Germany, passed through the town one evening on his way to Rome. He was much fatigued with his journey, and gladly stopped at the gate of the convent—for you must know he had letters of introduction to the abbess, and the emperor wished him to hear her opinion in the matter. There was a great clamour at the time about it, so history says, and Dissension, notwithstanding her secluded life, stood in high repute for her sanctity and zeal in church affairs."

"I should think so," broke in Tobias, his eyes brightening up with pride and interest.

"Well," continued Cackle, "the envoy, having refreshed himself, presented his credentials to the abbess, who, not having seen a man to talk to for years, so overwhelmed him with questions as to the news of the

world without, that, before he sat down to his evening meal in her private parlour, he had pretty nearly lost all appetite for it, and began inquiring for his retinue and horses to be off again. But he couldn't escape from Dissension; so she crammed him with savoury meats and choice condiments, while worming out of him, as well as she could, the particulars of his mission, and the intentions of the emperor, his master. She neither attended vespers, nor set the nuns any night penances, doubtless to their no small contentment; and after supper, when their attendants had retired, she still continued to pour forth such an incessant flow of words, until long after the convent-bell had chimed the midnight hour, when the envoy was carried off to bed, stunned and stupefied."

"He went to rest at last, then," observed Tobias.

"He went to bed," answered Cackle, "but not to rest. Our ancestress was not to be so foiled. Full of pity for his exhausted state, she followed him to his room, and, it seems, sat down by his bedside to watch and tend him. Her tirewoman, one of the lay sisters called Corvetha, waited in her chamber, to assist in unrobing her, for more than an hour beyond the accustomed time of her retiring for the night; when, growing anxious and also curious to know what could thus detain her superior, she went to seek her. She searched for her in vain, till, having passed through

the gallery leading to the outer wing of the building, where the stranger and his followers were lodged, she perceived a ray of light shining through the keyhole of a door; and, naturally enough, she knelt down and applied her eye to the aperture."

"And what did she see?" asked Tobias, anxiously.

"Why," continued the narrator, "she saw Dissension seated by the pallet of the envoy, and with one hand smoothing down his pillow, while, with the long, delicate white fingers of the other, she softly half stroked, half combed down his magnificent stiff yellow-red beard, from the pillow to its very point."

"What an odd occupation!" said Tobias.

"Most probably Dissension had some inklings of mesmerism or animal magnetism," replied Cackle. "There were profound thinkers in those days, and she was proud of being considered somewhat of a leech."

"And what effect had it?" inquired Toby.

"It certainly roused him," said Cackle, "for he grew restless under the process, and at times subject to violent spasms in his limbs, though soon relapsing into a sort of lethargy; but having, I suppose, great faith in her remedy, Dissension kept combing on — combing on — and asking questions which the poor fellow could scarcely answer, while, ever and anon, she arranged his pillow when it became tumbled by his twistings and turnings."

“Did Sister Corvetha see more?” asked the interested listener.

“Why, not much,” answered Cackle. “She remained with her eye fixed at the keyhole, intently watching the charitable attentions of the abbess, till, overpowered with admiration at the sight, she involuntarily laid her plump palm upon the handle of the door, and, uttering a low sigh, began to coax it up and down from very sympathy; but, presently causing it to rattle, she feared to be detected in such unseemly vigils, and returned with all speed to the sleeping-chamber. As to Dissension, she didn’t leave her patient till the hour for matins, by which time, through her efficacious treatment, he had fallen into an unquiet slumber; and when she at length entered her bedroom, she found the lamp burnt down in its socket, and Sister Corvetha lying back in her great easy-chair, murmuring in her sleep, as with one hand she swiftly and gently smoothed down its velvet-covered arm.”

“A strange taste,” said Tobias, “those two women had for beards.”

“’Tis a feminine weakness,” remarked the astute Cackle, “and strongly developed in our family. I have in my library a curious old book, penned by Dissension herself, treating of beards of every cut, shape, and hue, from time immemorial down to her days. It is written on vellum and beautifully illuminated. Erasmus Grundy

afterwards made a free translation of it. There are about nine hundred pages, including a treatise at the end on barber chirurgeons and *their* emblems. I'll lend it thee, Toby ; thou canst read it in thy leisure hours."

"Thank ye, Cackle," returned Toby ; "I'll skim through the work."

"Skim through it !" said Cackle, testily ; "thou must give it most sedulous attention, boy, to understand it properly, and the more so, its authoress being of our lineage."

To this reproof Tobias made no answer ; but, after a pause, he asked : "And the end of it, Cackle ? Did the envoy get better ?"

"On calling him next morning," resumed Cackle, "his attendants found him delirious from the excitement he had undergone, and his beautiful curling beard of the evening before looked limp and unglossed, like the draggled feathers of a farm-yard chanticleer on a dank and dismal November day." And here the speaker stopped for a moment to indulge in a laugh at this pleasant conceit ; then, continuing his recital, he said : "The poor man raved of a constant humming in his ears and swimming in his head. However, suffice it to say, his journey was delayed for a whole week, as all the nuns most skilled in the art of healing agreed in declaring they would not answer for his life if he were removed."

“Glorious Dissension!” ejaculated Tobias, gently lifting up his eyes. “But surely one of his suite might have taken in the proxy, mightn’t he?”

“Thou art a strange young speculator,” returned Cackle; “but I believe the matter was accounted of such grave moment, that even the bearer himself didn’t know in what part of his baggage the important document was placed, the secret of its whereabouts, though not its drift, having been previously communicated to a certain personage at Rome who would search the luggage for it, and who alone knew where to lay his hand on’t; but, however that might be, the envoy and his document remained at the convent.”

“Proceed, Cackle; I am interested,” said Toby. “A weak varlet this envoy to be so prostrated, methinks.”

“Dissension was a great woman,” quietly remarked Cackle; “but to resume. At the end of a week, though still suffering from exhaustion, he was ready to proceed; and when the cavalcade set forth, it was noted that all the beards of the retinue were somewhat jagged and hungry-looking, and the wearers by no means so well favoured altogether as on their arrival, owing, no doubt, to the fasts and vigils they had practised during their sojourn at that sanctified asylum; excepting, ’twas said, one young cavalier, who had no beard beyond a few straggling hairs on his upper lip and chin, which,

indeed, might be passed over as nothing. He alone, bounding into his saddle like a parched pea, departed from the place as stout and strong as when he came. They continued their journey with all haste, and never drew bit except to bait, nor let the saddles get cold until they halted, jaded and worn out, in the courtyard of the Quirinal.

“They arrived there quickly,” said Tobias.

“Yes, but—not—in—time,” replied Cackle, raising his forefinger, shaking it gently, and regarding his companion with half-closed eyes. “As the German rode into the court at the head of his band, a thin spiral wreath of blue smoke, from the burnt voting papers of the different electors, might be seen slowly ascending from the twisted chimney of the room in which sat the cardinals, and Urban II. was already head of the Catholick Church of Christendom.”

“Glorious Dissension!” again burst forth from the lips of young Tobias, as he stamped his foot upon the ground to give his words additional emphasis, forgetful of the tormenting boot, which caused him another twinge, thereby damping in a great measure his elevation of spirits. “And how did the affair end?” inquired he in a subdued tone, and drawing in his breath through his screwed-up lips. “Was the Pope grateful? And how fared it with the envoy? Methinks his sufferings in mind and body must have given him fair

quittance for his shortcomings. I should fancy the fellow was not in a state to take seat comfortably in a chair for many a day afterwards." And Tobias smiled painfully from feelings of mingled sympathy and amusement.

"Thou art a merry wag, Toby. No, nor his retinue either," answered Cackle, joining in the fun of his companion.

"Well, but as to Dissension and the Pope?" again questioned Toby.

"When Urban heard of the service which Dissension had rendered him, whether intentional or not," continued Cackle, "he forthwith despatched to her, by one of the so-called swift messengers of those days, letters of instalment as abbess in one of the richest convents in Europe. But, alas! 'twas sorry travelling then on mules, and the bearer was so long on the road that upon his arrival he found Dissension had died more than four months previously."

"Is it recorded what was the cause of her death?" asked Tobias.

"Why, it is said," replied Cackle, "that soon after she had so overwhelmed the envoy—I believe, indeed, the very day following his departure—she took to her bed, worn out by the fatigue of her night watchings, as well as suffering from an inflamed sore throat, brought on by the continuous rush of pent-up words she had

uttered ; and not being able to chide as usual the Sister of Charity who tended her as nurse, she expired one day in a fit of indignation and disgust, owing to this lamentable inability to speak."

"Poor Dissension ! Peace to her memory !" uttered Toby in a low voice.

"There was some talk of canonising her," proceeded Cackle ; "but those who have served us are soon forgotten after their death, and Urban had other things to think of in such troublous times : however, he showed his gratitude so far as to send for the renowned Blab, the reputed nephew of Dissension, who was brought up to the priesthood, and soon appointed him one of the special attendants about his person. Afterwards he despatched him to England in the train of an envoy who carried a Papal bull, or some edict, to the king—William Rufus, I think," said Cackle, tapping himself on the forehead with his finger to stimulate his memory. "But Blab was one disposed towards the church militant, so he joined the army of the first Crusade, though he returned, and finished his career as bishop here. His bones lie in yonder fair edifice," the speaker added, giving a side nod towards the spire of the cathedral, which shot up from the valley in which it stood, surrounded by the less aspiring buildings of the city, and partly showed itself in the distance above the intervening trees.

“Yes, I’ve observed his monument,” answered Tobias. “Tis a low tomb in a small chapel on the right, as you advance up the centre aisle; the head rests against a pillar, and there’s a shield, divided down the middle, placed above it, having on one side the ecclesiastical arms, consisting of three crosiers, and on the other those of the family, I suppose, as our six bell-clappers are very distinct upon it.”

“Yes,” said Cackle, proudly, “that *was* our coat of arms before being quartered with those of the Gabs and Popples and other great families, into which we married.”

“But to go back, cousin Cackle,” interrupted Tobias. “You have not yet told me the fate of the German envoy when he returned — if he ever did — to his country.”

“He did return — so it is said, Toby,” replied Cackle; “and, the emperor’s indignation at his tardy arrival in Rome not having subsided, orders were immediately given for his execution; and the way they put people to death in those barbarous times was something horrible.” Toby shuddered. “But, fortunately for him, he relapsed into a state of delirium, and, in fact, never recovered his reason, but was, I believe, confined in some public asylum or prison — where he ever afterwards went by the name of ‘Der Glapfer,’ or ‘The Yelper,’ owing to the peculiar noise he made, especially at night — till he

died : a singular instance of selecting a man for an important mission, not endowed with sufficient firmness to withstand all assaults, of whatever nature," concluded Cackle, puffing out his chest ; and then, shuffling himself into a strut, he quickened his pace, and turned, with his companion, up a side road leading to some domiciles placed on the crest of a gentle hill.

"And yet, methinks, cousin Cackle," began Tobias, "that ——"

"Hist!" suddenly exclaimed Cackle, in a short, quick tone of voice, and under his breath. "Hist!" he repeated, seizing the wrist of his young kinsman with a nervous grasp ; then halting for a moment, he laid the back of his forefinger on his sensual lips. "I hear a footstep — it may be he, for whom we look, already coming, Toby;" and saying this, he commenced dragging the submissive Tobias with sidelong steps towards a gate which led into a neighbouring copse. The pair disappeared on tiptoe into the enclosure, and found themselves enveloped in the thick foliage of the shrubbery ; when, quickly coming upon a narrow, neglected pathway, overgrown with weeds and grass, they crept along it for some paces, ever and anon bending their heads, as well to prevent them from being struck by the overhanging boughs as to avoid making any disturbance to betray their hiding-place. After advancing a short distance further, they emerged from this part of the copse

upon an open, turfy spot, a few feet in circumference, and bordering on the roadway, from which it was separated by a thickset hedge, interspersed with bushy hawthorn trees, and from behind which fence any passing object might easily be seen and recognised, while the presence of an observer there would not even be suspected.

“A lovely spot for our purpose,” muttered Cackle, giving a soft chuckle, and advancing with upright gait into the centre of the plot; then walking to the hedge, he quietly divided some entangled twigs and thrust his nose between them. “But I was mistaken as to hearing footsteps,” he continued; “everything appears to be still. Dost hear any sound, Toby? Thine ears are sharper than mine.”

The tall form of his companion at this moment appeared on the grassy carpet; but, in his eager progress, the youth had struck his foot rather forcibly against some implement of gardening unfortunately mislaid and forgotten among the leaves covering the ground in the thick shrubbery. This drew forth from him another suppressed oath at the unlucky wight who had fashioned his boots, as, being of delicate material and workmanship, one of them had given way, exposing the much mended and soiled hose of the youngster, and bringing it in contact with the damp mould and sodden leaves which lay rotting on the surface of the earth.

“Dost hear aught stirring?” again asked the elder gallant, withdrawing himself a few paces from the hedge, and regarding his companion with an inquiring look.

“Nothing but the rustling of the leaves, and, I think, the call of some purveyor of daily provender now going his evening rounds,” returned Tobias, a slight shiver passing over his frame, either arising from youthful impatience or the increasing chilliness of the atmosphere.

“A pest on’t! I hope we have not been deceived,” said Cackle, in a waspish tone; then, suddenly bending his noble head sideways, he exclaimed, “Ha!—no! this time I am not wrong; I do hear footsteps. Down with thee, Toby—low! quick! Use well thine eyes; they are somewhat younger than mine. I know the tread well—we’ve not come in vain;” and again the music of that low, victorious chuckle played lightly for a moment on the air.

The stranger whose footsteps were thus alluded to by Cackle, and whose anticipated approach had caused the hasty retreat of the watchers into the plantation, might now be observed coming along the road near their place of concealment. In appearance he was neither young nor old, nor, if we may be permitted to say so, middle-aged; in short, he was at that period of life when it was impossible to determine at what age he had arrived. His countenance was noble, and his mien that of a man having weighty matters on his

brain, and yet at the same time capable of the most trivial thoughts. His toilette was of the most *recherché* but plain description : it might almost have been pronounced foppish, had it not been for an indescribable manner in the adjustment of his clothes, which well-nigh led any one to accuse the wearer, at first sight, of a certain meanness of attire. On reaching the point of the road where the two friends were hidden, the stranger quickened his steps, and a smile lighted up his fine, expressive countenance ; but when he had advanced up the ascent as far as their place of retreat, a sudden noise (probably a muttered anathema from the vexed Toby) caused him to stop and hesitate. A dark cloud for a moment shaded his face, but only for a moment, ere a gain the same fascinating, genial smile rested on his features. "The sparrows possibly disputing over their evening meal," he murmured to himself, as, with stately pace, and carelessly swinging a cane which he carried in his hand, he resumed his way towards the row of edifices already mentioned as crowning the brow of the hill.

The watchers crept noiselessly to the upper end of the copse, and after a few seconds two faces were thrust from the brushwood at its extreme verge, their eyes following with eager gaze the movements of the stranger who had just passed by. "Out with thy notebook, Tobias," exclaimed Cackle, "and while I dictate

do thou write down my words as accurately as if thou wert counting the ransom of an enemy."

"Cackle Grundy, my kinsman," answered Tobias, drawing forth his writing materials from his leathern wallet, "the point of my pencil is on the paper, and it only wants thy words to make the deeds of this hour a chronicle of our house. By Dissension Yapp, the noblest dame of our race, we shall be able to mark this day with a white stone!"

At the conclusion of this speech, the youth sat down on the stump of a decayed elder tree, having previously (that nothing might distract his attention from the congenial work in hand) taken off the offensive boot, and flung it into a wheelbarrow which chanced to stand near the spot. His face then, laying aside the jaunty and youthful expression it wore a minute before, appeared to assume a seriousness beyond his years, as, with a method becoming his new dignity, he placed his book on his knee and in graceful attitude poised the pencil.

"A malediction on his head!" growled Cackle, his eyes intently watching the stranger. "The varlet hesitates: surely we are not betrayed, and the house of Grundy led a wild-goose chase. The dame is in her room, and I know awaits him; the dependants are bribed heavily, and the followers of our house are beyond suspicion: what then makes him hesitate? But no! my

fears get the better of me—it is but for a moment; he walks on, he stops at the folding gates. Scrawl down in thy writing-book, Tobias, ‘that the Stranger walked swiftly up to the gate, looked stealthily around, and placed his hand on the lock.’ Hast entered it in good round Saxon, cousin?”

“Lock,” repeated the young man, as writing down the last word, his countenance beaming with all the characteristic intelligence of his race. “Go on, gentle cousin Cackle. We are well in harness now, and by our old great-grandam, Bridget Grundy, yclept ‘the hundred-tongued,’ the fame of the house shall not be dimmed while its honour is in our keeping.”

“He opens the gate, he looks round again,” continued Cackle Grundy, not heeding, or perhaps not hearing, the laudatory remarks of his companion; “with slackened pace, he steals along the path to the principal entrance; again he pauses, he rings the bell of the building gently, and the knocker falls as if silently; he awaits the result. Hast it all down, Tobias?”

“I have,” quickly replied the young Tobias, his face flushing and travelling, as it were, with his fingers; for it now seemed, when this youth was warmed to his task, that head, heart, and hand worked in concert. “On, Cackle, on! I feel my blood tingling in my veins, as well with horror of this ‘wantonrie,’ as at the thought of our names being immortalised in the annals of our

race;" and again this true scion of the house of Grundy bent his head with an eager look and outstretched neck, resembling a panther waiting for his prey.

"The door opens," resumed his cousin, "a hireling appears at the portal, a low colloquy ensues, and, if my eyes deceive me not, he places a piece of money in the willing palm of the slave's hand. He's admitted," continued he, the words rolling off his tongue swift as the winter avalanche; "the door closes again, another opens: no, not yet—time, Madam Shameless, to arrange thy toilette, and make the comer eager for thy appearance. Ha! no! the door of the apartment opens; 'tis he that enters; she is there already. I see two figures reflected by the firelight on the white curtain of the further window: 'tis well, Madam, to draw it down so close. They shake hands, they laugh—I see it by the shadows!—their heads approach. Up, Tobias!" exclaimed the excited Cackle, clapping his hands together; "thrust away thy writing tools. By the bones of our ancestor, the Crusader, Sir Chatter Grundy of Jericho, who won his sobriquet there of 'the Parrot,' and his spurs, through setting the governor of the place and his wife by the ears, so that she betrayed the city to our forces in revenge, we'll make this event known through the whole length and breadth of Humdrum.'

"Ay," responded the younger Grundy, closing his note-book and slipping it into a safe receptacle at his

side ; then rising from his seat, and puffing forth a deep-drawn breath, he stepped apparently from the ranks of youth to that of the man of the world, at the same time abstracting his lacerated boot from the barrow, and proceeding to cram his swollen foot into it. "Ay," repeated he, "and before to-morrow's sunset, or I forswear the name of Grundy for ever !"

"Amen !" sternly asseverated the elder, preparing to emerge from their hiding-place in the plantation, and regarding his kinsman with an encouraging smile. "I've trained thee well, lad ; and thou wouldst be the first of thy race to belie thy blood and ancestry, if thou didst fail in this weighty affair."

"But shall we not await the egress of the Stranger," inquired Toby, "and track him home ?"

"It is not necessary," answered Cackle, turning his steps in the direction of the pathway through the copse. "He's safe till the midnight hour has struck, or I've been misinformed, at which time there are those on the alert will duly acquaint me with the manner of his going forth, and thou canst afterwards enter it in thy note-book, to conclude the chronicle of the event : thou hast left space on the page, Toby ?"

"I have," said Tobias, carrying his hand down to the place where the book reposed, and slightly tapping it to assure himself of its safety.

The two now threaded their way through the under

foliage of the trees without further speech, and finally issued forth from the iron gateway into the road.

“I have more work for this evening, my young kinsman,” said Cackle, breaking silence; “thou shalt whet thy maiden genius well at the commencement.”

“Where to next?” asked Toby.

His worthy Mentor stopped short, raised himself on the points of his toes, placed the back of one hand to his mouth, and, pointing towards the city with a slender riding-whip which he held in the other, he communicated in a low whisper his intentions to the gratified Tobias, who, inclining his head gracefully as he listened, endeavoured to work up his countenance into an expression of supreme intelligence. “I’ll follow thee to the end of the world, Cackle!” cried he, joyously, as they walked on again; and twiddling his moustaches downwards, he assumed a more jaunty, consequential air than ever at the idea of fresh prey being in view.

“Thou hast much zeal, Tobias,” said Cackle, “which will abate as thou growest older. Thou remindest me of the yet unbroken hound, when, both by the music of his tongue and the swiftness of his paces, he outruns discretion in his eager pursuit of the game.”

“And thou, Cackle,” answered Toby, with much emphasis, “remindest me of the slow but surefooted bloodhound. Some time perchance may elapse before thou hast thine enemy in thy grasp, but so surely as

night succeeds to day, so sure art thou to be successful in the end."

Cackle Grundy smiled complacently at this flattery from his admiring companion, but made no reply. They had now come to the turn of the road leading into the main highway, which they rapidly crossed at an angle; and diving into another road, where about a score of houses in a half-finished state were being erected, they quickened their pace, warned by the increasing darkness, and pursued their way towards the north-east side of the city.

CHAPTER II.

A QUEER, old, out-of-the-way, antiquated city was Humdrum, where our two gallants lived. It had always been different to other places in England in its ups and downs, and had even a roundabout sort of origin, when the Romans first discovered the opening of the estuary leading to its site, and, turning the prows of their galleys into the channel, ploughed up it till they arrived at the basinlike end, where they landed, and threw up their camp and earthworks near its head. It must have been a strongly fortified position, as the remains of it show to this day, proving also that the aborigines were much to be feared thereabouts. In fact, history has it that the stern, haughty intruders from the South never entirely subdued them; so, after remaining a good many years, they took to their galleys again, and sailed away from their uncomfortable home, tired of always quarrelling with such troublesome neighbours. Next the bluff Saxons found out the place, and pulled the old Roman premises half down, and, with

the stones built a village close to the edge of the sea, where they gained their livelihood by fishing, and lived on tolerable terms of friendship with the natives, who needed their fish and help in tilling the land. So they dwelt there in peace, and the village spread on the pleasant borders of this tranquil inlet of the sea. But, one quiet day, the great North Sea robbers came and peeped into the channel, and sailed up to the village, which was no sooner discovered by them than, according to the fashion of their wasp-like propensities and customs, they sacked and left it; and the inhabitants who were not slain fled into the country, remaining there till the rude brutal sea-robbers were well gone, when they returned to their pillaged homes, to fish and traffick again with the country people, and it became as of old, did this pretty Saxon village of the sea. Then the rovers from Denmark came and sailed along the coast, and they espied the inlet, and rowed up, and saw, and plundered, and, in their drunken moods, burnt the place to ashes (what a pity there are no Danish rovers now-a-days!). And again there was desertion and desolation for a time, while no sounds were heard there but the sighing of the summer breezes, or moaning of the wind when the winter's snow fell on the hanging woods, the shriek of the seagull, or shrill cry of the solitary bittern, mingled with the hoarse murmur of the waves as they slowly rolled in to break on those lonely shores.

But soon the great Norman, a bigger robber than any among the last two races, seized upon it, and gave away the fat fief to one of his favourite fighting followers, and bestowed broad lands to endow a church, after having turned out the Saxon owners. And down came this fresh set of marauders—the mighty robber’s favourite, with his retainers—but not in ships this time: no! no! overland, mounted on their large-boned Norman *destriers*, and clothed in chain-armour. So he took possession and built a stronghold, and the newly appointed bishop set about erecting a grand church and monkery; and the poor, timid, defenceless people came in from the country, where they had lived thinly scattered, and gave in their allegiance, and raised their huts under the shadow of the lofty stone fortress and religious edifice, to seek protection in their trading and cultivation of the land; and again a thriving village arose at the head of the valley, near the now retiring sea. But the great lords, and strong men, and haughty ones there, grew bold in their pride, and presumed upon the strength of the place and their distance from their king, so that they defied him; and wars and pestilences, rebellions and bloodshed, and bodies shortened by the head, were much in vogue in those days, and for centuries afterwards, to the frequent disturbance of this pleasant Norman country town near the still retiring sea. By an accident then, a mixture

entered into the blood of its people, and it was neutralised and sobered down by men of another nation, driven from their flourishing towns, coming to settle among them, and they brought their arts with them and taught their commerce, and the town flourished apace. Soon reed-environed, marsh-bound villages sprang up also in the country around, and cattle grazed, and the corn ears waved, upon that soil once covered by the sea. In time these hamlets spread and prospered till they became small towns, and the inhabitants made the most of the little streams on which they stood, and which rilled from their sources to the river flowing through the large town and away into the wide, salt sea. Thus did Humdrum wax rich and important, and sovereigns then, unlike the kings of former days, who often wished they could have trodden the unruly and troublesome place into the earth, looked kindly upon it, and gave it grants, charters, and privileges, and visited it in their royal progresses, smiling on its worthy burgesses and bestowing honours upon them, and reckoned it a jewel in their crowns, this growing, wealthy, industrious, and now world-known city, standing near the fast receding sea. Again a change came o'er it, brought on by various causes, influences, and discoveries; and the trade is nearly gone, its ancient guilds are passing into oblivion, its factories closed, its industry departed to other places, the old religion too forgotten, and differ-

ent forms of worship substituted in its stead. Yet in its time has it given to the land great warriors, brave, enterprising sailors, clever authors, learned and pious divines, and shrewd statesmen; and even now, men of note, ay, and handsome women too, are to be found in this quaint, half-deserted city near the sea.

And stretching far and wide along the banks of a winding river, on what was once the sea-shore, lies the half-mouldering, left-behind old town, one strange mass of Babel-like confusion, the many ancient top-heavy houses all jumbled together; some with their corners cutting sharply into the causeways, and others having the weight of their overhanging stories apparently supported by queer excrescences, or grotesque heads of animals unknown to Buffon or Cuvier. There, one old mansion, even more peculiar than the rest, built of small red bricks, and with pointed, serrated gable ends, stands like a patriarch among his descendants clad in the old-fashioned garb of his day. It is perhaps wedged in between two buildings, one partly modernised and the other wholly so, according to the extraordinary ideas of attractive shop-architecture possessed by enterprising traders, and is thrown into the shade by them, as fallen greatness is too often eclipsed by upstart vulgarity. A little further on, solid blocks of buildings placed here and there meet the eye, and old dilapidated bridges, their squat, narrow pillars green with slime and damp;

and quaint round church steeples shoot up over the tops of the red-tiled houses, overlooking the gardens strewn broadcast up and down the city. They are overlooked in turn by the tall chimneys of breweries and factories, the latter erected and worked by obstinate, pig-headed citizens of the old school, who would not be persuaded that their particular branch of trade was dead and buried long ago, but went on wasting their time, substance, and energies, till they found these exhausted and themselves bankrupts: modern examples of well-meaning, stupid, attached citizens, willing to sacrifice themselves for the benefit of their native place, after the manner of that brave and devoted, but, we think, rather maniacal young Roman warrior, when he leaped into the chasm; or those half-dozen magnanimous, yet again, it seems to us, very infatuated burghers of Calais, presenting themselves to King Edward with ropes round their necks. In many parts of the city, too, may be found the remains of the walls of monasteries, convents, and priories, or those once enclosing their solemn garden and exercise grounds, plainly showing their original strength and extent. Some of these structures, indeed, which have defied the devastating effects of wars and plunderings, are still standing in their old graceful beauty, though now used for other purposes than those for which they were designed, and where within may be seen, hanging side by side on the walls, long rows of

departed civic dignitaries, traced full length on canvas by the limner's hand. Fine old portraits are they of fine old men, with sure signs of the good living of the ancient flourishing guild times depicted in their portly forms and easy-going faces. And we wander among all these various buildings, through streets turning off at right angles, perfectly bewildering to a stranger; lanes leading nowhere, or abruptly terminating against some church-wall; alleys totally blind, and others which often saw more than they ought; and small, quiet, sleepy squares, or dreary open plains—the lungs, as it were, of this jumbled-up old town. Here ancient gateways may occasionally be stumbled upon, some of the wooden side pillars of which have their architraves deeply carved with the arms or initials of the great families, and even foreign potentates, who had their country residences or occupied lodgings there in bygone days; when such magnates of the land rode leisurely on horseback from the metropolis, and through these once bustling, but now almost deserted streets, followed by long and gay retinues of servitors and retainers, to hold their Christmas courts and revels in the country. Then again, there are lengthy, narrow, noisome passages—quays whose uses have long gone out of mind, and yards leading down to the riverside, planned as if several bottles had been placed neck to neck in a line, and in which are the abodes of porters and bargemen;

the open spaces being made stowage room for carts, hand-barrows, and empty casks. And there are quiet paved courts, and odd thoroughfares, unpaved, or so roughly laid down with sharp, uneven stones, that they had better have been left alone,—rugged paths enough into more out-of-the-way streets, wherein stand churches, the line of buildings abruptly broken by their graveyard walls, thrust some feet into the narrow causeways, as if the foundations of the edifices had given way and drifted there. Certain of these churches again are flanked by several series of steps leading up from the lower part of the town, and coming into what was the strand when the sea ran up so far, looking like a lot of old broken Jacob's ladders made of stone and thrown down there anyhow. Then in the suburbs are other lanes, with irregular rows of dingy, low-roofed dwellings on each side, leading into dreary by-roads, or connecting highways like architectural coupling irons, and bearing names which, through some local cause, were given to the spot when it was open country. Small towns of houses of no pretensions have thus sprung up on the outskirts of the old city; and along the roads a little beyond are scattered the stuccoed and porticoed villa residences of the more thriving traders who, despising the comfortable, old-fashioned dwellings over their shops, in which their forefathers were perhaps well contented to reside, have gone to live in what

they call "the country." For Humdrum has some remains of trade still, though in a somewhat different shape — the shadow of its former prosperity. This may best be witnessed on the great weekly mart-day; and as the old place appears to most advantage when thus half wakened up, it is then we would describe it in a general way. There is at such a time much stir and bustle in its chief thoroughfares; while in the roundstoned, paved side-streets, open plains and suburbs, particularly where the traffic is small, long strings of vehicles of every size, form, and fashion, may be seen, belonging to that class of country folks next to the middle agricultural, such as vendors of the produce of the land, sellers of poultry, or small dealers, as is notified to the world at large by the white-lettered inscriptions on various parts of the carts. They are carefully placed there, tilted shafts downwards, and ranged along close to the footways, taking up a good slice of the streets; and from under some of them, great gaunt-looking, stiff-haired dogs of the lurcher breed lie watchful and fastened to the axle-irons by strong cords; and on others, long-coated half-bred terriers, their eyes scarcely distinguishable for the hair falling down over them, are clambering up the sides and backs, yelping noisily at every passer-by. The horses, which shamled with them into town that morning, have been hustled into the stables of the

many small hostelries hard by, where, crowded together two or three in a stall, they pass the entire day, kicking, plunging, and biting, until their final dragging forth by the sleepy ostler, to be attached to their various vehicles; and then, belaboured by their stupid, half-drunk masters, off they run madly home to their domestic mangers, to enjoy a small paradise of comparative peace and provender for the remainder of the week. In the larger hotel yards stand the conveyances of the more substantial yeomen, the seats comfortably cushioned and padded, and the bodies of the structures built with an eye to convenience and ease, especially so far as regards room. The springs or resting gear are of the best that could be procured for money of the artisan skilled in such work; and the garnishing and varnishing, if a little gaudy, are of some pretension. The animals belonging to these are treated in a more delicate manner than the last we have depicted. They have stricter attention paid them, and some grooming bestowed upon them by the civil, better dressed ostler, who, when night comes, receives the charge for their care and keep, together with his farewell fee from their owners, touching the lock of hair on his forehead, as a receipt in full for it, when he leads the willing animals from the hostelry yard; and, with a neigh, they commence their sober homeward journey, easily drawing along the load of their well-fed and

well-drunk masters, though having more glossy coats perhaps, but quite as empty bellies as their less quiet fellow-brutes of the adjacent humble inn. Some laggard residents of the surrounding country, not being pressed by business to visit the city at an earlier hour, will be seen lazily coming in soon after noon-time, and speedily join the crowd in the principal streets, or in the large old-fashioned mart-place. Here long lines of open and covered stalls are planted, where the various chapmen offer their wares for sale; and among them stands many a sturdy agriculturist chaffering in the produce of his land, happy and contented in his busy ignorance. The humble huckster, too, in vegetables, bovine food, or other such needful edibles, with stentorian voice and hurried gesture, solicits the custom of the passers-by; while the market-woman by his side, in cleanly and modest attire, more gently and successfully, and with honeyed words, disposes of the delicacies from her poultry yard and dairy. In a conspicuous place, and high above the curious crowd, is stationed the itinerant leech, who, with voluble gesticulations and high-sounding phrases, draws upon the imagination of the simple tillers of the neighbouring soil, and with delusive promises palms off upon them his innocuous nostrums. Here again in various places are congregated small knots of men and women, evidently not sojourners in the town, eagerly relating the gossip of

their respective villages, and, if one may judge by the expression of their countenances, tearing many a reputation to threads, and showing how envy, hatred, and malice disturb the peace even of their primitive homes.

But now the hum of many voices is drowned awhile, when several squadrons of cavalry stationed in the city, the scabbards of their swords and horse-harness jingling, and headed by their band, pass through the square on the way back to their quarters. Fine, tall men are these warriors, admirably dressed and accoutred to parade through the streets of rural towns, if not to face the hardships of a campaign, and they bestride their fiery steeds with negligent military grace. The newly-fledged cornet among them smiles and winks, as he rides by, at any pretty-faced market girl upon whom his momentary attention may chance to fall; he well satisfied with himself in his gorgeous uniform, and she, poor thing, almost as well pleased as the soldier at his admiration of herself. And as the clang and crash of the brazen music thrill through the air, the chaffering and huckstering of the busy crowd cease for a time, buyers and sellers alike gazing open-mouthed, with apparent wondering curiosity, at the pageant, this riding past of the pomp and circumstance of glorious war. Scarcely have the sounds of the now distant kettledrums died on the ear, when an humbler military

parade succeeds. Red-coated and red-faced sergeants, their drawn swords carelessly resting against their shoulders, as if that were the only use for which those bright weapons were intended, and accompanied by pipeclayed and tight buttoned-up privates, march through the place with a quick light step, keeping time to the music of their attendant shrill fifes and rolling side-drums. They are followed by an admiring knot of turnip-faced yokels and seedy vagabonds, against whom all other doors of life have been long since closed. One or two of these are caught already, and walk half drunk by the side of their captors, making vain efforts to keep pace and look smart. Their hats, of any or no shape at all, are fastened and wound round with the flaring-coloured ribands denoting the various gallant bands for which their services have been obtained, and other embryo generals are swimming with more caution towards the net. They pass quickly on, and wheel up at the end of the square and break off; but they are heard there still, where that great faded sign hangs sagging and creaking on its hinges, three quarters over the broken pavement, before the wide, open doorway of a low tavern. It represents an oldfashioned-looking gentleman, dressed in military costume, with a very round, red, dumpling, whiskerless and apoplectic face, and an attenuated pigtail sticking out behind from under a three-cornered hat fiercely

cocked over his staring, fishy right eye. The colouring of the background of this work of art is nearly obliterated by time and frequent washings of the rain, and at the bottom the public are informed that it is the likeness of "The General John Cope." From the open bay-window, spreading the whole length of the house on the first story, now stream forth the shrill notes, sadly out of tune, of a lively quick march, played by the beery drummers and fifers attached to the valiants who lately exhibited their warlike forms in the square below, and which would seem to be necessary to raise the enthusiasm of reluctant recruits to the proper mark. Some more of the poor clowns are thus caught at last, to be sent off and drilled, red-coated, pipeclayed, and sworn at, and then drafted away to pestilential climates, to battle and fight — to kill or be slaughtered in turn — in their lusty, foolish youth, for a cause they neither know of, nor if they did would care for. Yes, the sergeant has told them "it is all for their sovereign, and the honour and glory of old England" — so wide a definition, that it would take the remainder of their lives to fathom it. And once more the chaffering and huckstering in the mart-place are resumed with more eagerness than ever.

Now, see there, arm in arm, three citizens worming their way through the busy crowd towards the great town-hall, which stands at the upper end of the square,

like a sentry over the morals of the people, and is built the same as the houses around, without the least regard to uniformity, but as if by accident, and when it may be supposed that land was plentiful and little law abroad, so that everybody had only to take what they wanted in that way. Perfect pictures these men are, real prototypes of the races who once so roughly ruled the country around: the one on this side, with the stout limbs, heavy look, slouching carriage, and long straddling step, a true son of the thick-brained old Norse sea-robbers and oppressors of bygone days, and, from his appearance, having many of their qualities in him still; the middle one — not so tall by inches — with his red beard and thick hair inclining to the same colour, with his restless eye and jerking gait, a worthy representative of that land which gave Vikings to its people — a bit of the robber in him, too, had this man who bore so outwardly and strikingly the characteristics of the Dane. Look at the third, on the other side: there's no mistaking that round bullet-head — short dark hair, much disposed to curl — that hard black eye, and well-knit, though somewhat heavy-framed body, and swaggering walk: — yes, there struts the Norman pig, almost as fresh and unaltered, through the blood of many generations, as if he had only landed yesterday. There they go, scowling and frowning on the poor people as they pass along, till they arrive at and ascend

the short flight of stone steps, worn hollow in the middle by the tread of many feet, leading up towards the Hall of Audience. Another citizen stands on the top, just within the pair of handsome iron-worked gates; and greetings are exchanged, and hand-shakings given and returned all round. Observe this fresh stamp of man. Whence come that broad, scorbutic, foolish-looking face, that sodden blue eye, light hair, and great unhealthy, puffy frame? Surely — yes — a cross-breed between the stupid Saxon and the beer-drinking Fleming, many of whom he reckons among his ancestry; all the good qualities of either, the obstinate bravery of the one and persevering industry of the other, entirely lost in him, while he retains alone the swinelike manner of living of the guttling Saxon and the drunken habits of his forefathers from the Low Countries, though in his cups, perhaps, claiming a further and longer genealogical tree, when he hiccups and swears he is “a true Briton.” And yet another joins them before they enter. A strange mixture of the lot is this last, a thin, cringing, oily-tongued, grey-haired, broken-mouthed, withered old man, who can stoop lower, and do it better, than the vulgar officials now ready to bow and scrape to him. He’d won wealth by it, and did it unknowingly, this thin, cringing, soft-speaking old man. The habit had grown into a second nature with him, and he’d speak of his abnega-

tion and self-sacrifice, for the good of his country and fellow-citizens, till he might have been supposed to be the last of the noble-minded Romans who once ruled here, if his gutter-born origin had not been too well known by those for whom he said he was ready to live and die. There these worthies stand, for a short space, under that gilded statue of Justice, placed in a niche over the iron gateway, holding her scales, the beam higher by a foot at one end than the other — emblematic of the justice administered within; and then, with a great empty laugh, they turn to ascend the wide angular wooden staircase — for they are proceeding to manage the affairs of the city, are these chosen ones, though notoriously incapable of properly conducting their own. Then the cringing petty officials bow down to them and smile, as they, in their turn, would bow down and smile on their betters; and the door of the apartment of justice is opened to admit them, and they take their seats there, among other eldersmen and wise bipeds (equally incapable), and mete out justice for the rest of the day to the poor, shivering, crouching beings brought before them, who are but a thought less ignorant than themselves. Well, there let us leave them; and down we are again in the market square, to take a look at the old flat-flinted, black-stoned town building, modernised and improved by the eldersmen and wise in council, such as those now sitting

within its walls. On the front, at the top, is a large broad-faced clock, be-pinnacled and placed there by a descendant of the Flemings in the days of his civic greatness; his epitaph beneath it, written by himself to be displayed there during his life — the idea taken from those time-tellers in the country from which came his industrious ancestors. Then again, there is one of the time-honoured gateways of the city, torn from its resting-place in some by-street, and, without any regard to difference in architectural design, let into the side-wall, making the old building look for all the world like a knight of the days of King John about to set forth to battle in complete armour, except that, in the place of his casque, he had chosen to substitute a full-bottomed wig surmounted by a three-cornered hat, and had drawn a pair of white kid gloves on his hands in the room of mailed gauntlets. But the power and taste of the great ones of the city had so ordained it, and who dared gainsay them? Near the hall runs a long, low double string of buildings, as if one of the stories of Noah's ark had floated and rested there on its breaking up, where another kind of mart is held. The spangled fish look so fresh there, as they lie on the sloping slate or marble slabs under the rows of game of every description hanging above them; and great round tubs and long troughs stand about, filled with fish caught in the fresh waters and ponds in the neigh-

bouring country. On a summer's day, how gratefully pleasant the water looks, splashing and welling over the slab-stones into the channel under the benches in the middle of this market; and how cool is it kept by the large dark-patched awning, bagging down overhead, placed there as a protection against the rays of the sun: the whole place reminding one, as with a whisper, of that far-distant Past when the painted and skin-clad natives from the woods paddled in their coracles down the shallow rivers, to barter with the Saxon settlers on the quiet sea-shores.

Then, quickly down again, we pass through the wooden sloping-roofed hucksters' stalls, and up to the higher ground, where long lines of tethered horses, droves of oxen, sheep, and pigs, which covered the roads in the morning, wending their way to the city, now stand on that large open space, frowned down upon by the old donjon keep. There again, higgling, bargaining, and selling, are the mud-bespattered, bluff-faced country folks; and high and angry words are heard above the lowing of the cattle and bleating of the sheep; and there is much pulling out of long, dirty-looking canvas bags, filled with gold, silver, and very dilapidated paper money, and handing over of large sums to willing, outstretched hands, to be again thrust into canvas bags, as dirty as those from which they were taken. Look at one group there—that clean-made, long-limbed, small-

calved, sallow-complexioned, and lank black-haired son of those people whose forefathers dwelt in the land beyond the boundary of the Five Rivers, and the pedigree of whose ancestors is lost in the mists of ages; whole tribes of whom once, like a big wave of an angry sea surging over its bounds, and flowing from east to west, scattered themselves over the continent of Europe; and, though dwelling apart, the same in their language, habits, and ideas. Ever banded against the stranger are these modern sons of Ishmael, whose hands are truly against every one, and every one's hands against them. See that one, now, mounted on the small, dark-grey, bony horse, his feet dangling within an inch or two of the ground; the animal on which he is astride hounded on in its paces by one of his companions, rattling a stick in an old hat, and who is as lazy, dark-haired, and cunning as himself. And soon they have sold the spavined, wind-galled, blind brute (for they are skilled in hiding defects, are these people) to a great stupid countryman, and are off and gone to the tents of their tribe, pitched on the wide tract of waste land, overgrown with furze and heather, looking down upon, and bounding, one side of the city, and where they had left their women and children in the morning. Yes, these descendants of the dark-eyed children of the sun are shrewd, and have overreached the stranger, in this traffic, as they have done thousands upon thousands of times before, and will

do thousands upon thousands of times again. Thus the chaffering and noise, the bargaining and higgling, go on throughout the day, and the gains of the traders and dealers in beasts and kine are deposited safely in the strong boxes of the money-changers and usurers of the city: pleasant and sleek men are they, and truly much confidence is reposed in them, these rich men of the earth, and worldly keepers of most of their customers' souls.

At length the business is done, and the taverns around that large, open, and now empty space, as well as those elsewhere in the city, are chokefull of agriculturists of all grades, and resound with dirty mirth and wordy fights going on, anent the transactions of the day, amid the fumes of rank tobacco and bad drinks. Then the time comes for the better class to break up and depart to their homes, where, next morning, they go through their matin devotions, with their thoughts full of the overday's gains or losses, bow to their pastor, and, after having chalked out for themselves their own particular road to regions of bliss, walk, surrounded by their families, through their peaceful fields, and, as the day wanes, sit down to eat, get half drunk again, and sleep, do these owners of many beeves and modern villains of the land. Their leaving town is marked by the same outward show of decorum, and very unlike the noisy starts from the smaller inns. There the landlords

have often to urge the departure of some wayward and self-willed husbandman to his bucolic home, or to eject, with pedallie thrust, many a noisy, obstinate citizen, before closing their castles for the night; while the higher hotel proprietor, his more sober guests departed, proceeds forthwith leisurely to reckon up the gains of the day, and to plan fresh impositions for the future on his unwary and unsuspecting patrons.

The well-kept turnpike roads, which from early dawn had been covered with horses and cattle of all kinds, are now half filled by smaller herds of scattered and refractory beasts, returning after having been purchased at the mart by some substantial yeoman or London factor, or are being driven into various pastures and fields adjoining, to await the event of the next great sale day. The heavy, broad-wheeled carrier's cart, which, in the morning, had imported a bevy of rustic beauties for the labour market of the city, is now leaving the town, and proceeds, slowly rumbling along, heaving from side to side, over the stones of the gloomy, straggling, ill-paved streets leading into the country beyond. On its way it passes by old iron and rag stores, shops where bad meat hangs or stale fish is sold, and others the windows of which appear to be composed of immense illuminated globes of red, blue, and yellow crystal, and where may be seen, within, sundry labelled bottles ranged on shelves, indicating that

medicine could be procured there by the poor people crowding the hovels and dens in the neighbouring filthy courts and alleys. In these windows hang black-framed notices, advertising that "advice gratis" could be had there, and teeth extracted for a trifle; a bowl full of the latter, in various stages of caries, being displayed in a conspicuous place, as pleasant proofs of the flourishing trade carried on by the practitioner in that branch of his profession. Other small traders' shops of every description — drapers', braziers', basket-makers', corn and tallow chandlers', and debauched, suspicious-looking public houses — offshoots, as it were, of their more aristocratic brethren in the interior — fill up the intervening spaces, hanging on, like poor relations, to the skirts of the great town, and struggling to maintain themselves in some way. Through all these, on and on rolls the merchant-ship of the roads, having exchanged its beauty freight of the morning for a return cargo, a perfect bouquet of domestic belles, seated at the mouth of the half-circular hood of the cart, bearing with them the last fashions and manners of the capital, and who are journeying to their old homes for a short season of release from their duties,—destined, alas! within a few hours after their delivery at their respective villages, to cause such upheavings, heart-burnings, jealousies, jiltings, and other commotions, as to make them one scene of discomfort; which internecine wars

last the whole time of their sojourn among their friends, and will not entirely subside for some weeks after their departure. The interior of the cart, behind these damsels, is filled with heavy goods nearly to the top; and on each outward side, as well as beneath, are attached or suspended various articles convenient to be placed there, such as iron bars for the use of village smiths, baskets of fish, and other cumbrous goods. Underneath is a dirty-white, common-looking dog, with a villanous head, being dragged along by a cord attached to the collar round his neck, half strangled, his eyes starting from their sockets, and barking furiously, until he finds that his efforts to stop the cart are of no avail, when he gives in, and trots sulkily along in his undignified thralldom. On the board in front calmly sits the driver, wrapped up in overcoats and leggings, and with a round, coarse felt hat, well pulled down over his forehead, to protect him from the chilly night air. He has as great a sense of responsibility depicted on his countenance as if he were really the captain of an East Indiaman outward bound, looking upon the feminine part of his cargo, indeed, in much the same light as some rich consignment in such a vessel, as he has tacitly answered to himself for their safe keeping and morals so long as they remained under his care. Having at last arrived at the end of the long street, and emerged some little distance on the road, he descends from his seat with

great dignity, and walks composedly by the side of his charge, cracking his whip or whistling cheerily. And as the huge machine jolts along between the bare, close-clipped hedges, and by the solitary milestones, he heaves many a sigh of satisfaction at the thought of having once more escaped unhurt the perils and sandbanks of the dangerous coast he is leaving behind him.

And back again in the old mart-place, where the candle lights are now twinkling on the stalls, and the shops are lighted up, and where the long lead-roofed church at one end of the square, its serried row of pointed windows flickering in the bright moonbeams, and just seen above the high pitched roofs, looks down over all, as it stands out sharply against the clear sky. The place is full of people, and many a poor artisan may be seen laying out his hard-earned wages on the much befingered meats and eatables rejected by the richer classes in the earlier part of the day, and paying just as extravagantly for them. The side walks and streets adjacent are crowded with passengers,—men and women, the idle and the industrious, the good and the bad, the loungers against shopdoors, the dapper citizen, and the poor hard-worked clerk, emancipated for a few short hours from his daily toil, the buskined, vulgar clown, the neat milliner, and the flaunting, painted, reckless courtesan; all elbow each other there. And, as the hours slip by, the traffickers become fewer, the

lights more thinly scattered, the hucksters' stalls begin gradually to disappear, and the shops to be shut; till at length the last customer is served, the last shop-shutter closed, the lights are all extinguished, and the loiterers fewer and fewer. A strange stillness falls upon the air, and in the great plain and neighbourhood, suddenly broken by the sound of the midnight hour clanged forth, stroke after stroke, from the high, square, black belfry-tower of "St. Timothy with the Slippers."

And silence reigns over the city; and the Spirit of Night roams up and down in its old-fashioned twisting and turning streets and thoroughfares, — now gazing on its open plains and green spaces, willed by some charitable donor to be set aside for the recreation of the citizens, — and then looking into the squares and deserted market-place, where the neglected garbage of the day lies rotting and raked up in heaps; and back again it floats on the wind to the lower and more ancient part of the town, and there it revels and gambols, and hangs over the time-worn bridges spanning the ditch-like river which runs sluggishly through the borough, and where lights might be seen glimmering here and there from the deep, diamond-shaped, cloudy glass casements of the wooden, worm-eaten buildings along the sides of the murky and almost tideless stream. Shells are these of the great garner-houses of the merchant princes of former days, — the

kernel gone, — and having long smoke-begrimed gardens at the back, once connecting them with the great, thick-walled, large-roomed, undrained, and ill-ventilated dwelling-houses standing in the streets hard by. The bones of the ancient owners—those giant traders—and of their families are now mouldering under the foot-worn pavements of the neighbouring churches, in which huge unsightly monuments, recording the age, good qualities (the bad ones all forgotten), and pretensions of the dead, are built into the walls, and stand out oddly from the whitewash so liberally bestowed there by the religious fanatics of succeeding generations. On one of a superior kind, perhaps, the effigies of the founder of some noted family, and his spouse and children, are cut into the marble, representing the stiff-fashioned, uncomfortable, frilled and trunked hose of the time. And the Spirit creeps into these churches, wrapping the monuments in gloom, and out again it rests upon the old warehouses, some of them now doubly defiled by dyers and iron-workers, and other traders whose business occupations take them to the riverside, where flat, wide, covered-in barges, their hatches battened down and deserted, lie moored under the low, dark brick wall of the opposite quay ; while the magnificent mansions behind, whose walls once witnessed the quiet happiness of thriving families, and often echoed to gay revelries, are now divided and turned into lodgings

for the poor, or have been pulled down for profit to be made of their materials, and their long gardens left to run waste, or used as stowage yards for old iron, timber, and worn-out implements of trade. Dreary and desolate the old buildings look, overshadowed by night and hanging over the inky water, their foundations rotting in the muddy bed of the stream; and the spirits of ague, cramp, and fever seem to have taken up their abode there, and to frolic among the dark wooden piles which rise up from the earth, just showing their slimy, iron-rimmed heads above the water close to the lower stories of the houses, and whose purposes are gone, if ever they had any. And suddenly a boat shoots from under the low archway of a bridge, and the tired fisherman in it looks up; and, as a feeling of something—he knows not what—comes over him, he peers curiously and keenly into the black gloom, and then turns away shuddering, and swiftly steers the boat with his quant to one of the flights of broken stone steps leading up to the quay. After fastening it by a chain to a post there in a hurried and bungling manner, he speaks harshly to the lad with him, bidding him extinguish the torch and go home. Then, shouldering his nets and quant, he mounts the steps and strides silently across the narrow quay, and, opening a door by lifting the snack, ascends the rickety, worm-eaten, creaking staircase within, and enters his poor, scantily furnished



The Spirit of Night.

lodging-room. After many efforts with his shaking hands, he lights a miserable dip candle, and, forgetting his nightly pipe, throws off his clothes and creeps into the cold, solitary bed, and, giving one restless, piercing glance at the ill-fitting rattling door, ready to fall from its rusty hinges, puffs out the light; and again, the feeling of something—he knows not what—stealing over him, he pulls the scanty bed-clothes high up over his face, and, closing his eyelids firmly, turns himself to the wall, and, drawing a deep, heavy breath, tries to sleep. And down over the narrow quay, and away and away goes the Shape for another whirl in the old town, and over and over the bridges again, and into the alleys and courts and open places, and over the heaped-up graves and nearly obliterated headstones, leaning all ways, cropping out so thickly from the churchyards, where the long coarse grass is twining and growing, and old stunted trees are standing near the walls, their dismal foliage fed by the rotting coffins and dead men's bones below. And up the Spirit goes through and through the belfries where hang the silent bells, and round the ivy-clad, ruined steeples, and through the cloistered squares and low sepulchral colonnades and chantries, and among the slim poplars. Then sweeping upwards again, borne on the sougling wind to the higher parts of the city, it meets with nothing now to tell of life but the occasional tramp of the night-watch,

or of some snug, well-to-do, wifeless trader fresh from his mild weekly debauch,—the last of the party to leave, and mentally conning over his gains and revelling in his worldly prosperity,—or mayhap the stealthy step of some houseless, homeless, and moneyless wretch, seeking where to stretch his weary limbs and lay his aching head, the poor, world-forgotten body,—or the light tread of a gay young roysterer who elbows him, and is fast wasting his health and substance, the fag-end of a ribald song upon his lips, heedless of the beacon then passing him, his eyes too watery and his legs too unsteady to allow him to notice it for a moment. But now these last stray wanderers are gone, and a deeper stillness reigns over the old Flemish-like city. The Spirit and silence have it all to themselves; and in the deep hush of the night, save where burning fever or racking pains cause sad vigils to be kept in the sick man's chamber, the minds of the dwellers therein have made themselves wings and float away to the dim neutral ground of dreams. And the rich and the poor,—the hard taskmaster and the heavy-laden artisan,—the attenuated, careworn worker at the loom, and the poor wretch who has not earned wherewithal to stay the cravings of his daily hunger, the pangs now forgotten for a time,—are all level in the dread solemnity of unconscious sleep.

CHAPTER III.

ON a fine day, shortly after the occurrence of the scene which has been described of the watchers on the hill, the deep tones of the many church clocks in the city of Humdrum, vibrating on the keen, bright, ambient air, proclaimed the time to be two hours past high noon. It was just then that the most agreeable mixture of business and pleasure, bustle and lounging, prevailed in that quaint old provincial metropolis; and the faint music-like *carillons* from the bells of the distant churches — the dying embers of the old religion in this last stronghold of Catholicism — fell pleasingly on the ear, mingled with the subdued hum of life as it passed through the streets of the city. Before the shops of the traders in the principal square were dotted the vehicles belonging to the neighbouring owners of vast domains. The very horses harnessed to these equipages seemed to partake somewhat of the nature of their lords, as, with defiant heads, and thin, wide nostrils, they chafed at their bits, and threw the white

foam from their high-bred mouths amongst the humble pedestrians. The charioteer, tranquilly perched upon his seat, with half-closed eyes, and reins listlessly hanging from his hands, sat absorbed in meditation and thick-coming fancies; now perhaps thinking of the precious freight confided to his charge, and anon, complacently, although impatiently, contemplating the one oasis in his imagination—the smoking delicacies which would greet him on his return to the attendants' lofty banquetting-hall of his noble chief. The followers of a lower grade—their hands firmly placed on the fastenings of the chariot doors, awaiting, with quick-eared sense, the immediate egress of their mistresses, or, with time on hand, jauntily lounging against the panels, or leaning sideways against the portals of the traders, with that air of *insouciance* only acquired in the service of the great—haughtily stared at the humble citizen as he passed. Their liveried overcoats, covered with the emblems of their lords, gracefully hanging low upon their stalwart forms, their hair arranged and decorated according to the prevailing mode—in short, their whole appearance displaying that courtly yet stern bearing inherent in the race from which these retainers of the great are drawn—beautifully filled up the picture of aristocratic life, which might otherwise have fallen harshly on the eye of the observer. Within his shop, the obsequious trader cunning in the workmanship of

gold and silver, or whose ware-rooms groaned under the weight of the vagaries of Fashion (some of these merchant citizens, no doubt, having argosies upon the seas enough to purchase thrice over the inheritance of many a castellated lord), awaited, with bent head and winning smile, the capricious orders of his gentle customers, now pressing this fardel of newest modes, and now that, upon their refined and haughty attention. The worthy burghers, ay, even the young gallants of the city, as they passed, turned bewildered yet respectful glances upon these representatives of high-bred county life, and, by whispers and approving remarks, unwittingly acknowledged their superiority of race. The very equipages, the horses, the servitors, all received their due meed of praise, which fell involuntarily from town-bred lips, as, with bashful tread and retiring mien, the city folk pursued their way. Here again might be seen thrifty housewives, and gentle dames too, hurrying, with purse well grasped in hand, from shop to ware-room, from ware-room to emporium, and again back from emporium to shop, cheapening and ordering home the daily comforts for their families in town and country mansions. With pleasurable confusion and ill-concealed gratification, the city dame perchance receives a passing salutation from some county lady; then hastening onwards, she bestows in turn a highly imitative, condescending bow upon an acquaintance

moving in less select civic society than herself. In a word, Humdrum was sleepily astir, and the sun and Grundyism shone resplendent.

Under an archway, which formed the entrance to a paved passage leading to chambers of resort, reserved for the magnates of the city and surrounding neighbourhood, and which abutted on the chief lounge of the mart-place, stood a group of town gallants, filling up the greater portion of the opening and part of the causeway. They appeared to be all of the same standing, and, by their loud talk and lofty manners, at once proclaimed their superiority of breeding and position.

“Is there no news in the city, lads? By St. Catharine! the times are getting plaguy dull, and the people, methinks, mouldy virtuous, now-a-days!”

These words were drawled forth by a tall, gaunt, long-backed man, apparently intent on holding up the emporium of a trader, against the corner of which he negligently yet heavily leaned. He was in sooth as ill-favoured an individual as could well be met with in Humdrum or elsewhere. From his upper lip hung, or rather stuck out, a stiff, dingy-looking moustache, as if attempting to hide from view the remains of a straggling row of long, yellow, prominent teeth. These were distinctly visible, nevertheless, without his moving the muscles of his ever-gaping mouth in speech, giving him the exact look of an over-roasted hare; while his ugly

countenance was so far from imparting the least intelligence, that the closest observer could detect less than nothing behind it. His manner was insufferably overbearing and patronising; yet it could be seen at a glance that he was neither worth seeking as a companion, valuing as a friend, nor fearing as an enemy.

“Well, there is an affair going on — progressing, I might say,—but”—here the speaker hesitated—“I’m not at liberty exactly, Captain Swallow, to mention as yet; but if I could——”

“Ah! so I thought,” interrupted he called Swallow; “if young Toby Grundy could give us no tidings, the times are dull indeed; but I think he’s romancing this bout.”

“Hem!” muttered Tobias Grundy, who was restlessly hanging on the outskirts of the knot of gallants; and he gave a twiddle to his moustaches, apparently stung by the real or fancied offensive tone in which Swallow uttered the words; “hem! Thou wert ever a fawning flatterer, gallant Captain, but the days are not yet come when we shall have nought else to do but count our fingers.”

“Why not do more, then, young braggart?” asked the Captain. “It is to such as you that we ever look for some rarity to entertain us, and now thou dealest in nought but hints and hearsays, and noddings of the head. Methinks Tobias is getting into years before

his time, or is in love, and, by St. Catharine and the bones of my ancestors! a trifle idle into the bargain;” saying which, he thrust his huge hands into the apertures of his nether habiliments, and straddled out his ill-made legs and misshapen feet.

A frown rested on the glowing face of Tobias Grundy for an instant, like an angry cloud passing swiftly over the summer sky; then, in low, impressive tones, which might be heard ringing through the party, he said: “I know little of St. Catharine, Captain Cormorant Swallow; but, by the bones of my ancestors! if report be not a liar, the less said concerning *thine* the better;” and, slightly elevating his voice, he laid a marked emphasis on the possessive pronoun.

“What meanest thou, young Grundy?” asked Swallow, drawing himself up to his full height, and leaving the emporium of the trader for the nonce to support itself.

“Oh! nothing, nothing,” quietly answered Tobias, giving a sidelong glance at his companions to see how his cut had been appreciated, and to gain encouragement from them; “but if we are to believe all — we — hear, neither Captain Cormorant Swallow nor his ancestors can boast much of having ruffled it through life entirely scatheless.”

“Now, by my bright sword! I’ve a great mind to——”

“No, thou hast not,” broke in young Grundy, now fairly committed to the fight; and, like a desperate young warrior, knowing his spurs were only to be earned by boldness and courage, he shook off a certain timidity which had influenced his first attack, and moving a pace forward among the group, he said, looking Swallow into the mouth, “You’ve a very small mind, or rather, gallant Captain, none at all; and as for *thy* sword, thou mayst safely swear by its brightness, as I never yet heard thou wouldst be prevailed on to draw it under any provocation whatever;” and Tobias still gazed fixedly into the Captain’s mouth, and drew in his breath, as if preparing for another and a deeper thrust.

During the utterance of this speech, the sallow visage of Swallow assumed erst a red, next a grey, then a bluish, livid hue, then again changed to a deep red, and once more turned white, till there seemed to ensue upon it a flushing of all colours, which finally settled down into none at all, from the effects of suppressed rage and concentrated ire at being bearded so publicly by the hitherto despised stripling standing before him. Several times he attempted to catch young Grundy’s eye. But no! the youth knew his vantage-ground; he only stared harder than ever into the gallant Captain’s orifice of eating, and though his throat swelled visibly, he turned not his well-shaped head an inch. Again

and again Swallow tried to retort; but the fixed look of those round, prominent, and pale-coloured eyes fell like a magnetic influence on his organ of speech. His hat was slightly raised from his head at the young man's audacity: the words which he would have uttered stuck in his throat, or died away upon his lips in undertoned curses. Half frantic at last with cowardly rage, he looked around for some pretext to withdraw himself from the company. This was luckily afforded him by the appearance of a tall, whey-faced youth, in the undress uniform of a cavalry officer, who, with jaunty step and vacant look, passed by, swinging a light cane in his hand, and humming a roundelay to his ladye-love. He seemed to be wholly unmindful of the city gallants; but no sooner did Swallow catch sight of him, than, muttering a few words, in which the name of "Lord Gourd Penguin" was alone audible, without the least ceremonial of leave-taking, he swaggered off straight down the middle of the pavement, where he quickly overtook the tuneful lordling. After a short parley, he thrust his arm within his, and the pair turned a corner leading out of the square, and soon disappeared in the intricacies of the neighbouring narrow streets.

A dead silence ensued for some minutes after the departure of Swallow. Young Tobias Grundy stood as though he were cut out of marble, his eyes yet fixed on the spot where the Captain's mouth had been, ap-

parently looking into an imaginary aperture, so intent was his stare.

“By the owls of St. George! my young friend Tobias, thy wits are not like the Captain’s sword,—they’ll not rust for the want of using; they’re sharp too, and cut deep. Thou gav’st him a goodly thrust; he was hardly on his guard, when thou wert well within it. Thou wert through him before he was aware on’t. Thou hast not thy name for nothing, nor dost follow thy kindred and their instructions without profit. Where hadst thou the news of the bully Captain’s mishaps, youngster?” continued the speaker, who had slightly withdrawn himself from the circle, with the others, while the fight lasted, but now it was fairly over could come forward, as indeed did all the rest, to back the winner with admiration to any amount.

“We have our informations, Master Roger Smooth-face—we have our informations,” returned Tobias, slowly recovering from his intent gaze and rigid attitude, and endeavouring modestly to resume his original position outside the party; failing in which attempt, he went on: “The next time I encounter that fellow in speech, I’ll teach him to cultivate the virtue silence for the future,” and his glistening eye followed the now fast retreating form of the discomfited man of war.

The gallant, whose words of praise drew forth this

renewed threat of vengeance from Tobias, was one of a robust frame, inclining to stoutness, yet proper withal, and in stature about the middle height. His countenance bore on it a smirking, self-satisfied expression, and a constant simper dwelt on his face, as if he delighted in displaying his white even teeth, or, with a mind unruffled by petty cares, was well pleased with himself and the gossiping world in which he lived. His appearance and manners were juvenile to a high degree, but these were contradicted by his hair, which was marvellously grey; so that, if, on first beholding him, a casual observer would pronounce him to be in the prime of life, after a more minute inspection he would probably be perplexed to fix his age at any year between those of twenty-six and sixty-two. His person was decked with quiet yet elegant simplicity, though, if gorgeous apparel had been his leaning, wealth was not lacking to compass his most extravagant ideas, for Roger Smoothface was a man well to do in the world. A dark grey sporting overcoat, with slashed side-pockets, covered the upper portion of his vigorous frame, a brown inner vestment that part of his person from the throat to the waist, and his lower limbs were encased in a sort of white linen stuff, loose fitting and extending to the ankles, where it was barely met by long-quartered shoes, laced up in front with black riband to confine them neatly to his feet. In this elegant and graceful

attire, he stood, and, if he were old, like a ruined castle, magnificent in his decay.

“Thy wit is pungent as the pepper of Cayenne, my noble young friend,” again broke in Smoothface, keeping his eyes riveted on the youngster, who now began to shuffle about a little uneasily, either through being too earnestly regarded by those around him, or from the tightness of his boots. “Thy wit is sharp indeed ; what think’st thou of it, friend Jacko ?” he asked, abruptly turning and addressing a square-shouldered man standing by his side, whose visage strangely resembled one of that species of baboons haunting the ruined cities of glorious and burning Ind ; and, to increase the likeness, his long arms dangled at his sides in ape-like fashion, every now and then twitching with a jerking motion, as if ready to fasten on a tree or pilfer any article of food. His costume was in strict accordance with the fashions of the time, and which we have before so minutely described as worn by the Grundys. In this instance, however, there was this difference, that the style of his garments seemed to glide from those worn by the aristocracy into those of the trader, and then again, showing as it were the leaning of the man, they gently ascended into those of the aristocrat. If we might be allowed to coin an expressive term to explain our meaning more clearly, we should pronounce

them of that class to be called the "neatly uncomfortable."

"May I never more sit at the head of festive board, or drink toasts into the small hours of the night, but our young companion's wit was sharply edged, and well delivered too," quickly answered he of the ape's face, as, removing his hat, he ran his fingers through his bristly, whity-brown hair, which stuck out strongly all over his head after the manner of a besom of the period used for the cleansing of religious edifices, and which it much resembled; at the same time he cast glances of seeming admiration at his sticking-out knees and splay feet. "I think the hectoring Captain'll not forget it quickly; he'll not try *carte* and *tierce* again with the 'Toby,'" uttered he affectionately, "when tongues are to be the weapons of the *duello*. His rest's spoilt this night. I don't exactly, though, catch the point of that thrust you gave at the Captain's ancestors," he added after a moment's pause.

"Didst never hear the history, Jacko Titterwhit?" inquired Smoothface. "No? Listen then, I'll tell it thee, for I am better instructed in the matter than our young friend here." Titterwhit at once sank into an attitude of mute attention, and young Grundy, availing himself of the lull, dropped out of the circle, and, leaning lightly on his cane, stared industriously at every passer-by.



The Lucky Swallow

“Know then that many years since Swallow’s grandmother, a woman born in humble circumstances, fell under the care of the custodians of the poor, and, while in such care and under their roof, gave birth to a male child; and they, not desiring to have the expense of keeping it thrown upon them, immediately cast about for a paternal ancestor, and for some time to no purpose. So they pressed the wench closely, threatened her with prison and worked upon her fears, till she made certain confessions, so that the choice of such ancestor at last lay between two individuals, great men in their day, Alderman Swallow and Alderman Butts. There appeared to be some truth in the girl’s words, for the aldermen met on the business, and, not being able to come to any definite arrangement as to which of them the boy should belong to, they agreed to decide the affair by lot.”

“How by lot?” interrupted Titterwhit.

“Tossed for him, Jacko—tossed for him, man, with a golden coin of the realm; but don’t interrupt me, or I lose the thread of my story.”

“Proceed,” said Jacko.

“Whether Alderman Swallow marked that day with a white stone or not, I cannot say, but, as fortune willed it, the child fell to him.”

“He was the winner,” said Jacko.

“He *was* the winner,” echoed Smoothface, with em-

phasis. "The alderman behaved well, I must say; he accepted his fortune, gave the boy his name, and brought him up to his profession."

"And what was that?" inquired Jacko.

"A scrivener's, Titterwhit — a scrivener's," impatiently answered Smoothface, annoyed at being thus interrupted in his narrative; "and when he died much respected, as the chronicles of the time had it, left him all his wealth."

"And his mother?" asked the inquisitive Titterwhit.

"Oh! she died before the Alderman, and left him nothing but her wits."

"Mother's wit, I suppose — he, he, he!" simpered Jacko.

"Titterwhit, must I beg of thee again not to interrupt me? Do let me go on."

The rebuked Jacko closed his mouth.

"So now," resumed Smoothface, after pausing to collect his thoughts, "thou hast the foundation or origin of his family, and this ——"

"At any rate he came of a great house," again broke forth the incorrigible and talkative Titterwhit, grubbing at a stray hair on his chin, and looking up somewhat vacantly at Smoothface.

"Tut, Jacko, tut!" said Smoothface, waxing more irate at each fresh interruption; "be silent, will you? and give me thine ear."

“I will,” said Jacko, pricking up both those, to him, most valuable appendages.

“This stray swallow, as we may call him,” continued Smoothface, looking hard at Titterwhit, as much as to say he had given him wit for wit, “lived, flourished in his business, married, and had children. Cormorant was one. He wasn’t clever enough, though, for his father’s calling, or for any other honest one, it would seem ; but they sent him into the king’s army.”

“Yes, yes, the 26th Horse, an honourable position !” ejaculated Titterwhit.

“A cornet — as a cornet in the 26th Horse — right, Jacko, right. But if thou knowest so much, pray finish the tale thyself ; only, if I am to go on ——.”

“I’m silent,” humbly answered Titterwhit.

“Even in this profession he didn’t shine, for there was a great talk of kickings about to be delivered, and floutings about to be administered, for some causes given, and the Captain, being from his youth up of that amiable and peaceful disposition, that he had made a vow never to fight, such shedding of blood being doubtless against his nature and religion, it was thought advisable that he should retire from the army, which he did with the rank of captain, gained partly by lucre, and partly by assiduous attentions and strict obedience to the wishes and commands of his superiors.”

“A good quality in a soldier,” asserted Jacko, loudly.

“Jacko Titterwhit! one moment; I’ve nearly done.”

“Pardon me, Roger; I couldn’t keep it, but I’m dumb. Pray finish.”

“Well, as I said, he retired from the bearing of arms, or rather, after having sold his commissions under the king’s command, he returned here to his native city of Humdrum, and has ever since stalked about amongst us, as thou knowest, striving to hector it over our most esteemed burghers, whenever occasion serves.”

“I’ve heard somewhat of the story from old Mardle Driveller, the retired factor,” now said Titterwhit, with a sigh of relief at his tongue being permitted to unloose itself. “He died some years since; but I never gave much ear to it, for we all know what old Driveller was, and the tale had wellnigh gone from my memory.”

“Driveller might be right as to the main facts,” answered Smoothface; “but in the particulars, Titterwhit—the minutiae—he’d be at fault. Tut, Jacko, I’ve heard ’em a thousand times, as I’ve stood, when a boy, at my grandfather Babble’s knee, when he was in his after-dinner drinkings.”

“Ah, Master Roger,” returned Titterwhit, “thou hast the tale well enough, and, as thou saidst before

thou gavest it forth, young Grundy hath a shrewd wit, a very sharp wit. We ought to congratulate ourselves that he's growing up among us. To be sure, the Captain looked for all the world as if he had been cut by a duke."

"Arma cedunt togæ, Jacko Titterwhit," said Smooth-face, eyeing the youth from top to toe with renewed admiration, in which he was joined by the rest of the circle; "his time is young yet, he'll have many occasions again to enter the lists; but, I prophesy, I'll never live for the day to see him worsted, Jacko—to see him worsted."

"I bear thee out in that, Roger—I bear thee out in that," reiterated Titterwhit, chiming in with his companion's opinion. "Once put our young friend, if I may call him so, fairly on the track, earnest in the business, and I'd not give much for the chance of man or woman either;" and the speakers wagged their heads to and fro with slow solemnity, and stared at each other with their great round eyes, like a couple of those sage birds by which one of them swore.

These sweet words of adulation melted in the ear of Tobias Grundy, like to the summer dew on the parched-up earth, welcomed—ah! how welcomed! His feelings were visibly affected, as was testified by a little grunt of satisfied yet pardonable vanity gently forcing its way from his bosom; then placing his cane under one

arm, he folded both across his Antinous-like chest, and, with assumed indifference to the eulogies of his surrounding admirers, appeared to be more engrossed than ever in moodily contemplating the many comers and goers along the mart-place.

At this moment there whisked round the nearest corner of the square a vehicle drawn by one horse, which held on its way till it arrived in front of our gallants, when it was suddenly arrested by the driver with a jerk of the reins, and brought up close to the kerbstone of the pavement. It was one of those long-bodied, low chariots of the period, much affected by professors of the healing art, and constructed with a seat behind, for the convenient carrying of a retainer or body-servant when occasion required. In colour it was everywhere a dark green, except the wheels, which were choicely picked out with white; and on each side, as well as at the back of the vehicle, appeared the arms of the owner (one of the occupants), painted by the hand of a superior heraldic delineator. The shield of these was lopsided and elongated in shape, somewhat like a bottle, divided down the centre, and with another line lengthways, half across, to form two quarterings on the right side. In the upper compartment of these was a magpie proper, holding a spoon in its beak, and in the lower square were three pairs of eyes vert, on a field of pure argent, all having an extraordinary obliquity of vision. In the

other undivided half of the shield, were, at the top, four forked tongues gules, pointed downwards, with a large human ear beneath, wide open, into which three javelins or darts were directed, the lower parts of their shafts coloured sable, as representing they had been dipped in poison; these being the well-known arms of the celebrated family of Venom, and beautifully shown on an azure field. The crest placed above the shield was the ancient one of the hand, or rather arm and dagger, raised ready to strike; but with the addition of a second or left arm, the hand of which was firmly planted on the shoulder of a man's body, turned with the back towards it, and apparently thus grasped for the dagger to be plunged in up to the hilt. The motto "*Verba non facta*" was on a scroll beneath, and doubtless the whole formed heraldic bearings of a high order; although the broad bar sinister running athwart the shield, indicated that the family which boasted them, however eminent now, was not of unblemished origin.

On the front seat of the carriage sat two individuals, both of whom appeared to be in the meridian of life, or perhaps slightly past it, but otherwise totally unlike each other. One was a pale, faded-looking man, with ragged reddish whiskers on the sides of his long, lantern-jawed face, and with small, weak eyes. He affected a stiff, upright carriage, only occasionally rolling his head from side to side, as if unintentionally

giving vent to his thoughts; and there could be no question as to the opinion which he entertained of himself. The other, who drove, was a fat, rollicking, red-faced little man, with spectacles on his nose, and in manner very fidgety. At first sight any one might be disposed to like him till one looked at his mouth, which was coarse, and there seemed to be a sneer always ready to play upon his lips, and after observing this, the liking for him went away. Behind them sat a body-servant with folded arms, and wrapt in a large overcoat hiding his under servitor's uniform. His hat was drawn down over his eyes, which were firmly closed, for he appeared to be lost in thought, or fast asleep. Even the abrupt stopping of the vehicle only disturbed him for a moment. He just opened his eyes, gave one vacant stare around, and then relapsed into a state of calm repose. Probably his spirit was heavy after his midday meal; for his well-developed frame and sturdy limbs told plainly that, if his lord fared scantily, at least the table where he refreshed and sustained the inner man must always be well spread. The carriage bearing this load of medical skill and its adjuncts, was drawn by a beast of dappled grey, large-boned, strong in frame, and high of action, yet so sleek and well-fed that no angles could be seen; and his arched neck and nodding head, causing his long mane to wave to and fro as he champed at his bit, showed

his high mettle. Altogether the whole turn-out was "quite a picture," as Titterwhit observed when the vehicle first came in sight, adding, "Nicholas Tot with Venom Rankle, I declare! Where can they be going together? And Nick is driving! I wonder Rankle trusts him with his horse; he is so short-sighted, and 'tis a fine animal."

"Ah! how are ye, lads—how are ye?" said the driver, as he pulled up by the pavement. "Ah! Smoothface, as gay as ever! Titterwhit—your hand, old fellow; I haven't seen you for an age. Ah! Bison and Godwin le Strutt here too, and Ricketts, and young Grundy there in the background. Step out, man; what makes you look so melancholy?"

Aroused by this salutation, Tobias shook off his reverie and advanced to the edge of the pavement, though not so gracefully as he would have done had his boots been a little easier; but, even under the circumstances, the great Spartanlike self-control possessed by him almost hid this little misfortune.

"No, our young friend is not melancholy," answered Smoothface for him. "'Tis only Achilles again after the fight with Ajax, Nicholas Tot. 'Young Achilles' I call him now. Oh! you have lost a great treat; Swallow will never forget it."

"Swallow is an empty-headed fool," said Tot; "but in turn I can tell you that you've lost a sight. Only

just now we passed Sir Walter Ivy, arm in arm with Barabbas Grubb in the open street—in the middle of it—*arm in arm*, and talking confidentially too. You bear me out, Rankle?”

“Most assuredly,” pompously returned the whity-brown-paper-looking man sitting by his side.

A blank look of wonder, mixed with disgust, shaded the faces of the whole group; when, after a few minutes’ silence, he who had been addressed by Tot as Bison le Strutt, exclaimed, “With Barabbas Grubb! Surely, Master Tot, you are mistaken. Consider Sir Walter’s position.”

“I could scarcely believe it myself,” answered Tot; “but here, Rankle can speak to it as well as I; and”—he ceased speaking for a moment and turned to the back part of the chariot, as if intending to call in further testimony from the retainer; but, finding that individual’s thoughts were not just then of this world, he fronted himself again, and reiterated, “Yes, Rankle as well as myself can speak to it.”

That learned man did not deign again to open his mouth. Pearls like his words fell not often for the common world; so he only nodded twice in corroboration of Tot’s assertion, and then sank back on his seat, leaning gently on the cushions of the chariot.

As if providentially, to render the startling incident described by Tot past all doubt, there now emerged

from one of the principal streets leading into the mart-place two individuals in close conversation, and walking straight along, so that they must pass within a few paces of our gallants.

“There!” cried Tot, triumphantly; “there! what do you think now, gentlemen?”

“Surely it is Sir Walter,” said Bison le Strutt; “he’s easily recognised. There’s the spotless white neck-dress — somewhat stiff, to be sure — the overcoat hardly long enough for his person, and the light drab garments for the lower man; and, as I live, with Barabbas Grubb on his arm!”

An uneasy silence fell on the party as the pair approached. In a few moments they were on a line with them, when he who might be recognised as Sir Walter from Bison le Strutt’s description, turned his head, and, in a gay, *débonnaire* manner saluting them, exclaimed, “How do, lads—how do? Sunning yourselves, eh? Good morning.”

A simultaneous bow was returned by those to whom he addressed himself; but no word of response was heard, or even offered, as, with their mouths half agape, and their eyes wide open, the whole party looked after the retreating figures of Sir Walter, and Grubb firmly clinging to his arm.

Titterwhit was the first to speak. “Well!” was all he uttered, but in a tone which conveyed volumes.

“A fellow whose grandfather came out of the very muddiest mud of the lowest alleys of the city,” cried Bison le Strutt, who, it might easily be seen, had an immense amount in him both of family and personal pride. This Bison had been intended by nature for a large man, but somehow it seemed as if she was in a hurry when about to complete him, and had stopped short. He had a large head, large whiskers, large limbs, large hands, a large, loud voice, and a large manner; and yet, after all, he didn’t look large or commanding, and carried no weight with him. He had a good deal of the barber in him, mixed with the manners of a dealer in linen goods, and he endeavoured to get up a bit of the military swagger of the day; but this unfortunately proved a failure. It would not mix with the other ingredients, but floated on the top, like oil on water. He prided himself greatly on the antiquity of his family, which had been settled for ages, he said, in the land. It might have been so, as few or no records remained extant concerning them; only common report was known to have it, that, some time out of mind, one of his ancestors had been the superior of a house of entertainment in the city for the reception of jaded and benighted travellers: but probably this meant he was the head of some monastery or priory. Bison was proud of the Le Strutt coat of arms too: it was so simple yet expressive — three herrings swimming — and for the

crest a porpoise floundering in the sea, with the motto, "J'enfle." "A very tadpole of society," he continued, "and now arm in arm with Sir Walter!"

"Well, you know, Sir Walter's sun is now, they say, behind a cloud. He has need of moneys, and they do say Barabbas has them at command," said Smoothface, as, with a knowing look, and half closing his eyes, he contemplated the company.

"And may I ask if any one here knows who and what Sir Walter's ancestors were?" burst in young Grundy, who, thinking he was getting into the background, tried to bring himself into notice again by putting this general question.

"His great-grandfather on the paternal side was, I believe, an humble yet energetic doer of the sheriff's behests," returned Smoothface, solemnly.

"So I've heard Driveller say," blurted in Titterwhit.

"Driveller be ——" thundered out Smoothface, driven half wild by the constant buzzing of this human hornet whenever he spoke.

"Blest!" interrupted young Tobias, laying his beautiful, plump, though somewhat soiled hand on Roger's mouth, and smothering the anathema ere it could come forth. "Speak well of the dead, Smoothface. But as to old Ivy, he in some sort belonged to and served under government. He held an office of responsibility and repute, requiring sureties to some amount. One

may say he belonged to the crown; and even the worst that can be said in Sir Walter's case is to quote the old adage, '*Nous revenons à nos anciens amours.*' It shows what blood is: generations die out, you see, honours are bestowed on the present race, and yet the old leaven comes to the top—froths up, I may say;" and a flush of pride overspread the cheek of Tobias at the thoughts of *his* ancestry, and he drew himself up, well pleased at having again, for the moment, become the cynosure of admiring eyes.

"Well, we must be off," suddenly exclaimed Tot. "We are too long here, Rankle; but pleasant company, you know, makes us forget time."

"Where are you off to, eh! Rankle?" inquired he who bore the name of Godwin le Strutt, and was brother to Bison. He was a pale, rather foolish-looking man, and yet with an attempt at wisdom in his face, too. His limbs were ill-fitting, and in a measure ungainly; and he had an awkward way of standing, dropped on one leg, with the opposite shoulder twisted forward. He had been brought up to the healing art, but his practice was of such a secret and select kind that no patient of note in the city was ever known to have mentioned his name in connection with them in a professional, or indeed any other way. It was said that if he had been let alone he might have earned some small place in the world, but by educating him

the few brains he possessed had been quite addled; but this no doubt came from his detractors. "Anything in our way?" he went on, and leaving his mouth half open.

Tot answered quickly for himself and Rankle. "No, lads, only the yearly gathering by Squire Tally Warrenhead before his great rabbit hunt. We were invited a week past. There's Lord Stiffcard of Dryrot Hall, Sir Plumpton Wobblesack of Still-moat Grange, and Dame Wobblesack, Lady Vestal Winnidraw of the Barrens, and nine of her sisters — high-bred women, very — and a host of others we are to meet. So good-bye, good-bye." Gabbling out this hasty adieu, he gave a smart flick with his whip, the lash of which, touching the near fore shoulder of the steed, caused that beautiful animal to toss his head, and, with a quick plunge and playful lifting of his hind quarters, to put himself and the wheels of the chariot in motion, but so suddenly that the body and head of the somnolent retainer were jerked forward, the latter pitching straight into the indignant back of the learned and dignified Rankle, just as he was gracefully bowing an adieu to his friends.

A scowl came over the face of that eminent practitioner, and the servitor, in much confusion at the mishap, gathered himself up and settled himself again; when Tot, having adjusted his spectacles, gave another

cut with his whip, and the carriage was quickly drawn out of sight.

“What a day they’ll have of it!” began Bison, as soon as they had disappeared. “Stiffcard and the Winnidraws would alone make a nice party. A couple of clear-headed fellows they are too; you ought to be proud of Rankle in your profession, Godwin.”

“Yes,” answered Godwin, “we are proud of him. The name of Venom Rankle stands almost first among men in the foremost ranks of our calling. Besides his professional abilities, his talents as an author are wonderful. His work on the medical attendance of the Israelites in the wilderness (every name of the physicians he discovered by the greatest research) is a miracle of learning; and then his other book, where ‘he dug from under the thick crust of antiquity’ (I quote his words)—but from what source no one knows—the principal dish served at Belshazzar’s feast: roast leg of pork, you know—he got it. A wonderful writer!”

“With crackle on?” interrupted Titterwhit.

Smoothface looked at him, and Titterwhit simpered and dropped his arms by his side.

“And then his play,” said Godwin.

“What’s that?” asked Titterwhit. “What’s its name?”

“Oh, ’tis called *ἡ οὐρά ὄνου*.”

“Never heard of it. What does it mean?”

“The translation of it would be ‘The Ass’s Tail.’”

“Where was it acted? and is it in Sophocles’ or Euripides’ vein?” inquired Titterwhit. “I don’t remember it. What’s the plot?”

“Plot? ha!” said Godwin; “Rankle’s above that. Any block can copy those before him. Rankle’s play is original; it has no plot. In that lies the genius of the piece. He sent it up to two or three managers of theatres, but they couldn’t find talent enough in the profession to act it; so there it is on the shelves of our great library here, unread and unappreciated. He’s a man before his time — thousands of years, thousands of years!”

Titterwhit, on hearing that the works of this learned physician were lying unread close at hand, had moved off two or three paces towards the building containing them. But, suddenly becoming aware of their being so much in advance of the age that probably he would not understand them, and that it would be waste of time searching for them, he deferred the attempt to some more fitting opportunity, and, returning to the group, dropped his arms by his side and resumed his attitude of attention.

“You’ve read the play, haven’t you, Hawker Ricketts? or at least, I think I’ve heard you say, Rankle gave you a private reading.”

The man, then addressed for the first time, was the

chosen friend and companion of Godwin le Strutt, who always tried to bring him out on all suitable occasions, but never could. It had been hinted, indeed, that he was his one patient, and therefore his attachment to him; but his constant state of ill health effectually contradicted this. He was pale-faced and paralysed-looking, and dressed in the extreme of provincial fashion. No one knew what his occupation was, or whether he had any at all; but curious people had whispered that he was connected in some way with the sale of one of the staple commodities of his country. Though not of the higher class, one of his ancestors had had his bench broken for a very large sum of lucre; and another, his near kinsman, had held a high commission in the king's army, from which he had been driven or kicked out. Upon these foundations Hawker Ricketts took *his* social position in the society of Humdrum, and kept it.

To Godwin's question he gave no answer. He opened his eyes, indeed, made a motion with his lips which might mean anything, and then relapsed into quietude, much to the annoyance of Titterwhit, who remained with his mouth wide open, in tantalising expectation, doomed, alas! to disappointment, for Ricketts made no further sign.

After waiting some moments longer, and perceiving that no further information was likely to be obtained

concerning these remarkable literary works, Titterwhit began unconsciously to pull again at the obdurate hair on his chin, and to stare about him in a somewhat weary and vacant way. Espying young Grundy, however, on the outside of the circle, he gradually edged round to his side, and, slightly touching his arm, looked him full in the face, and said, as if suddenly remembering something: "By the bye, Tobias, thou didst mention, at the outset of our discourse, that an affair is in progress, or that thou knowest of something which would amuse, if not instruct us as to the proceedings of the—hem!—world about us. If I am not too inquisitive, I should like, that is, if it please thee to tell——"

During the time that, with a modest consciousness of his own powers of reticence, Titterwhit was thus developing his inquiring mind, the countenance of Tobias Grundy assumed its most important look of secret intelligence. His lips half opened, then closed again, then opened wider, displaying his teeth—a little irregular perhaps, and large, and a thought too brown about the upper parts, but suitable nevertheless to him. A pause ensued, when, finding Titterwhit did not conclude his inquiries, he lifted his right hand to give his usual graceful twiddle to his moustaches, and began in an undertone:

"Know, Titterwhit——"

But there he stopped, as looking straight forward his eyes appeared to encounter something which riveted his attention. His fingers remained on the tip of the hair growing on his upper lip, and once more his attitude became stonelike. Titterwhit endeavoured to follow the direction of his eyes, and, for very fellowship, his finger and thumb continued to pull at the stiff hair on his chin, while he looked alternately at Tobias and in the distance where his gaze was fixed; still he could see nothing to render the change in his young friend intelligible to him.

“By all the Grundys, there they are!” muttered Tobias between his teeth; and suddenly passing through the party, he began, with long though limping steps, to make his way to the upper part of the mart-place. Titterwhit, who had watched his retreat, although without ascertaining the reason for it, heavily moved after him, hoping to overtake him and get at the story, which he was now dying with curiosity to hear.

The object, or rather objects, which had attracted the attention and caused this abrupt movement on the part of young Grundy, were two persons, — a lady, accompanied by a gentleman, who had entered the mart-place at the upper end, and who now, instead of crossing the square, suddenly turned aside and proceeded down one of the many streets branching from it. She appeared to be tall, well-formed, and of graceful

carriage, and her companion was no other than the Stranger of the hill.

Now, although Tobias made the best use of his time and legs, in which he was indeed somewhat hindered by the tightness of his boots, yet, before he could cross the square, the objects of his pursuit had disappeared; and when he arrived at the street down which they had turned, nothing was to be seen of them. It was a short thoroughfare, and he dashed, limping, through it. Arrived at the end, he looked up and down his new vista; nothing, positively nothing, could be seen. He then retraced his steps, and gazed into all the traders' windows he had passed on his way. In vain he peered into every one of them on each side of the street; he could catch no glimpse of either the lady or the Stranger, and a look of deep chagrin overshadowed the flushed face of the young Grundy at the failure of his hopes.

"They must have sunk into the earth," said he to himself. "I am so sure they went this way. What's to be done?" After a minute's thought he seemed to answer this question satisfactorily in his own mind. A smile illumined his clouded countenance, and, twisting round upon one of his now really suffering feet, he dashed off again at a halting run; nor did he stay his pace until he had passed midway through a by-street turning off from one of the chief thoroughfares of the

city, where he drew up, breathless, at a door painted green, leading into a large paved court. A square brass plate was let into the centre of this gate, upon which might be seen, engraved in old English letters full two inches in length, as follows: —

C. Grundy,
Doctor of Laws,
and
Scribener.

Titterwhit remained still standing in the midst of the mart-place, lost in thought, grubbing at his chin.

CHAPTER IV.

AFTER young Grundy had taken some moments to recover breath, he gently turned the handle of the gate and entered a sort of half court, half garden, surrounded by houses and ivy-covered brick walls. Part of it was paved, and the rest laid down as an oblong grass-plot, with a narrow border for flowers at the further side, where a few plants of monkshood, London pride, and spider-wort tried to flourish. In the centre stood a weeping-willow, its drooping branches looking doubly distressed at having to mourn in such a confined and cheerless spot. Tobias passed up the worn pavement in front of the residence, — a long, old-fashioned building with many windows in it, apparently never meant to be opened, — and stopped midway at the door. On one of the side posts were several brass knobs arranged in a perpendicular line, communicating with the bells of the mansion. Hastily running his eye up and down these, he placed his hand on one, over which was engraved the word “Office,” and gave

it such a determined pull as to expose the wire many inches, and announce his presence to the inmates by a lengthened clang. But no sooner had the bell commenced sounding than the door flew open as if by magic. Nobody appeared; and Tobias, after giving one glance at his boots and another around him, entered the rafty-smelling hall. Here sat four or five people, — poor clients, no doubt, awaiting his great kinsman's leisure, — and he looked hard at each of them as he went on towards a door nearly at the end of the passage. Pushing this open, he found himself in the outer official apartment, next to that in which the Doctor held conferences with those who sought his valuable advice. Now even this ante-room and the one clerk posted there were but as shadows of the great mind within; the forethought and worldly knowledge of Cackle Grundy seemed to pervade the place, and his genius to have made his follower worthy of himself. The atmosphere was a rare combination of the smell from old parchments, papers, resin, dust, and burnt oil; legal confusions might almost be said to enter the brain by the mere breathing of it for a while. Through the sand loosely strewn over the floor appeared innumerable sprays of ink, and the pale grey walls were clouded with the smoke of coal-fires, lamps, and candles, as though business hours were oftentimes extended there into the far night. The grate, where smouldered a small

fire, was of the plainest and narrowest kind; and the chimney-piece of painted wood showed notches here and there, made by sharpened penknives. Over it hung a faded old painting in a decayed black frame, the full-length portrait of a very short, fat judge of other days arrayed in his robes; the only work of art there except one suspended above an iron safe in a recess by the side of the fireplace, showing the plan of some projected improvements in Humdrum, choicely illustrated in water colours. Within the opposite recess, on a bracket fastened against the wall, stood an old-fashioned timepiece in a black case, and with a brass face, long spider-shaped figures and skinny hands, and which went on ticking and ticking till it almost drove the nervous, impatient waiters on Grundy's leisure mad with irritable excitement. The clerk was used to it, and 'twas thought to be his custom to watch its effects on the many comers and goers into this apartment set aside for his use. On one side of the room were several shelves filled with volumes setting forth the law of the land from the earliest periods, and having tasty bindings of blue and drab-coloured paper, with white labels at the backs to tell their purport. Some were of extraordinary thickness, but did not appear to have been consulted lately. In all likelihood the contents were deeply rooted in the minds of the Doctor and his clerk, and any reference to them would be unnecessary; however,

they answered one purpose, in being worthy objects of awe to the seekers of advice from the oracle within. For the convenience of the clients, a few high-backed chairs, with rather dilapidated cane seats, were placed round the room. The only occupant now of one of them in the further corner was a stout, elderly lady, dressed in mourning, and holding a large black silk bag in her hand, from which she occasionally extracted some documents to consult, and then a kerchief to wipe her heated face. But the chief object which met the eye of any one on entering was a sort of stall, with slender wooden palisading along the top, through which all who came or went might be observed, and boarding off a desk of humble wood from the other part of the room. It was just in front of the door, and within it sat Grundy's clerk on a high stool, tilted back for the more convenient resting of his head against the skirts of his parade coat hanging from a nail behind him. His eyes were closed, and he was evidently pondering over some very knotty point of law, so undisturbed was he by the entrance of Tobias. On the desk before him lay a kind of coarse paper several times folden, to which he had, apparently in his moments of learned leisure, committed such thoughts as occurred to him at the time. Upon it was recorded his name, "Josiah Stumps, Clerk to C. Grundy, Doctor of Laws;" then appeared the name of that illustrious

man only, his place of residence, and the date of the year. Also an indication of his daily occupations was shown in the words "This Indenture witnesseth," and "I do hereby give and bequeath," carefully indited in old English characters. Again, in various parts he had tried his powers as a draughtsman, as seen by the half and whole delineations of heads, in profile and full face, scattered among the specimens of penmanship. But here he had somewhat failed, his taste for the limner's art not seeming to have been much cultivated, and imagination had had full riot in the sketches; yet they were probably more esteemed by him than all the writing on the many bundles of papers lying upon a skeleton iron shelf near him, — some very bulky, and tied round by ribands or narrow tape of a red hue. Young Grundy advanced with rapid steps to this pen, and, addressing Stumps by name, inquired whether his master was within and disengaged. No answer was returned; but, on the query being repeated in a louder tone, the worthy clerk first opened one eye slowly and then the other, gradually taking in the form of the questioner. Upon fully recognising the person before him, he righted himself by a sudden effort, placing his hands on the edge of the desk and bringing the fore legs of the stool to the ground with a thump, and then turned round upon it as he replied, "Well, Mr. Tobias, he is engaged, and very much so at present."

“Likely to be long?”

“Should think so, sir. He’s now with Miss Waitjoy, respecting her marriage settlements. You know, sir, going to be married to young Musseldew in a fortnight. Lucky fellow, Mr. Tobias,” added Stumps, with a leer, and rubbing the knees of his lower garments, which shone with long use.

“Important business, Stumps. Just step in and say I’m here on important business — won’t detain him long — very important, Stumps, very;” and Tobias looked at him in so mysterious a manner as to induce that gentleman to descend from his stool, and, first running his fingers through his wiry grey hair, he crossed the room to a green baize door leading into the apartment where the Doctor gave forth his advices. He opened this, entered, and carefully closed it after him; but only a few moments elapsed before he reappeared, and, having returned to his seat, announced to the impatient Tobias that his master could not be interrupted.

“Did you say important business, Stumps?”

“I did, sir. But he’s now arguing with Miss Waitjoy on the descent clauses. She will have all the estates strictly settled in tail on the sons, and, failing such issue, on the daughters, according to age. The Doctor suggests, if there should be no issue, that her husband should take.”

“Sons! daughters!” exclaimed young Grundy in



The Office

surprise. "Why, Stumps, Miss Waitjoy is near on sixty years of age, if she's a day."

"Maybe, sir, though she don't own to it by a good deal. But, ah! sir, that's what make 'em more particular. If she was but twenty the thing would be clear and straightfor'ard enough; but ladies being so long their own mistress get kicky and hard to deal with. She 'ont hear of Mr. Musseldew inheritin' except after the death of the children, or if there shouldn't be any, she shall be at liberty to will it as she like, or in default to go to her relatives. Hard, arn't it, Mr. Grundy? I argued the point with her myself, sir — yes, sir, *I* argued it — could make no impression, though, leastways very little," and again he thrust his fingers through his hair, and took down a pen which was stuck behind his ear; then raising the lid of the desk, he looked closely into it for a moment, and drawing forth some paper, prepared it, as if to write.

"'Tis very hard, I allow," said young Grundy, now interested in the settlement business confided to his kinsman's hands, "as my opinion is, Stumps, that Musseldew ——" but here he broke off, and looked towards the old lady in mourning. Stumps turned round, and, pointing with his pen in the same direction, answered the look by saying, "She don't matter, sir. She's taken up with her own concerns."

"My opinion is, then, Stumps," repeated Tobias,

though in a lower tone, and going close to the stall, "that Musseldew would soon be the death of her;" and here he closed his left eye firmly, and looked Stumps full in the face with the other.

"And my opinion is, that she'd sooner be the death of him, Mr. Grundy ; for a more waspish and——" but here Stumps paused, and, closing his right eye, looked full in his companion's face ; then, after a while, they opened their respective right and left eyes and closed the others alternately five or six times ; then unclosing both, a mutual knowing smile played on their countenances.

At this moment the door was jerked open, and there entered or rather bounded into the room, after the manner of an India-rubber ball, a round, undersized, rosy-faced man, clad from head to foot in a complete suit of dark-coloured kersey. After returning a pace or two to gently close the door, he removed his hat, which was of a white hue and appeared to be too large for his head, and advancing quickly, with a score of short bounding steps, up to the open door of Stumps's pen, against which the young Tobias was gracefully leaning, he asked :

"Well, how do we get on?"

"Oh! Mr. Boggs, sir, capital! We're going ahead fast; we're only waiting for the affidavits," said Stumps.

"I'll see after 'em myself, Mr. Stumps, to-day; and,

I say, I'll make one : you know, it'll strengthen our case. Have it ready, and I'll call in either to-night or in the morning to swear it. How's the Doctor ? ”

“ He's well, sir, and high busy too,” answered the clerk.

“ That's right, Stumps ; I won't disturb him now ; so good-bye, good-bye ; ” and with these words, the little man turned, and, making a succession of small bounds towards the door, soon disappeared.

“ Who's he, Stumps ? ” inquired Tobias the moment he was gone.

“ He ! ” answered Stumps, in an astonished tone of voice ; “ who's he ? What ! not know T. P. Boggs, Esq. Affidavit Boggs, you know. I thought everybody knew him.”

“ Never saw him before in my life, Stumps.”

“ Nor heard on him, Mr. Tobias ? ”

“ Nor heard, that I'm aware of,” he replied.

“ Well, Mr. Grundy, you do surprise me. Why, sir, he's now in five courts, to my certain knowledge, at this very present time. Let's see ; ” and Stumps began telling off on his fingers. “ ‘ The Court o' King's Bench,’ one ; ‘ Common Pleas,’ two ; ‘ Exchequer o' Pleas,’ three ; ‘ Local Court o' Humdrum ’ — though that's hardly worth the namin' — four ; ‘ The Ecclesiastical Court ’ — which may go to the House o' Lords, you know, on appeal — five ; — and I'll tell you what, Mr. Tobias : I'll bet my

next half-year's salary ag'inst nothin', he'll be into 'The Criminal' afore he die, he have such a knack on 't. Wonderful man Boggs, sir — T. P. Boggs — extraordinary man!"

"Is he?" said Tobias, with rather a blank look on his face at not having observed him more closely when he had the opportunity.

"Is he, Mr. Tobias? Why, sir, the affidavits that man has made would break down a Coloshus, sir."

"Colossus, Stumps — Colossus."

"Well, sir, a Colossus, if you like. Why, sir, he's sworn whole waggon-loads, enough to bury twenty men such as he; and now he's at it again, swearin' away like mad. Talk of the wonders of the world — 'the Coloshus o' Roodes,' 'St. Paul's Cathedral' ——"

"I never heard, Stumps, that St. Paul's ——"

"The British Museum," went on Stumps, not heeding this interruption from young Grundy, "and the others, which at this time I don't exactly call to mind. Why, they're a nothin' to him. I do call him a wonder."

"What's he after now?" inquired Tobias.

"Oh! the Ecclesiastical Court: you see, he's runned off with another man's wife — el-loped, I think they call it. He's been a batchelder all his life, and I s'pose, seein' no way of getting into this court except in this wise, he did it on purpose. I don't think he cares much

for the lady, at least as I knows of. The affidavits he's sworn in this suit alone, Mr. Tobias, are awful."

"Extraordinary man, Stumps—extraordinary man."

"You may say that, Mr. Tobias. My idea is, that if you was only to tie a bit o' red tape round his waist, he'd be a perfect walkin' human affidavit—a human affidavit, sir," repeated Stumps, chuckling at this piece of wit.

"Singular ideas—odd man," said Tobias.

"Singular! odd!" echoed Stumps; "why, Mr. Grundy, that man ped last year, to my knowledge, for law costs, between party and party and solicitor and client, betwixt three and four hundred pound, all out of his own pocket, Mr. Tobias."

"Rich, Stumps? expensive taste, isn't it?"

"Don't know, sir; we all have our leanin's, law's his. On'y think—five courts, 'King's Bench,' 'Court o' Common Pleas,' 'Exchekker o'——'"

"Yes, yes, I know, Stumps; you've mentioned them before."

"Yes, Mr. Tobias," now uttered Stumps vehemently, and bringing his clenched fist on the desk with a loud thwack; "and my firm belief is that he, Thomas Pimpel Boggs, would be into a hundred courts more, if there was 'em to go into. He would, Mr. Tobias, Affidavit Boggs would, I feel assured. Thirty law-suits he's had a'ready, and lost twenty-eight, and now he ain't darnted."

Any reply which young Grundy might have made was cut short by the sudden reappearance of Mr. Boggs, who noiselessly opened the door, and approaching Stumps's desk, hat in hand, made his presence known by tapping the rails at the top of the pen.

"I think, Mr. Stumps," he said, "I'll call in this evening and swear the principal affidavit, and to-morrow I'll call again early and swear a supplementary one: it'll look better, and make our case stronger before the court;" and then he gave a glance at Tobias, and another at the old lady in mourning, of something like contempt, at the thought perhaps of their incapacity to swear affidavits equal to himself.

Stumps nodded, and the little man again bounded out of the room.

Tobias looked after him for a minute half breathless, but, recovering himself, he said:

"Well, Stumps, I think I'll go too; I can just take a stroll and call again," and nodding familiarly to him, he left the office, more deeply impressed than ever with his learned kinsman's astuteness and extensive legal practice. Stumps gave himself a shake, and presently his pen might be heard scratching over the paper before him.

On issuing forth from the entrance gate, Tobias proceeded to loiter among the neighbouring streets, peering curiously into the windows on each side of the way; frequently giving a smile and a nod to any fair worker

in woman's gear he might chance to see, or lounging for a short space at the shop doors of traders, to exchange a few gossiping words on the topics of the day with the owners. In this manner nearly an hour slipped away, and he thought it time to make another attempt at seeing Cackle, and therefore turned his steps towards his residence. Arrived there, he entered at once, and found Stumps alone in his office, sitting as usual, with the stool tilted back, and his head resting against the tails of the coat hanging behind him, but now with only half-closed eyes, as if engaged in ascertaining how the folio he had just finished would look at a little distance. At the noise of the door being slammed to by young Grundy, he brought his seat again to a level, and hastily turned round upon it.

"Well, Stumps, I suppose I may go in now," said Tobias.

"Why, no, sir," returned the clerk. "Mrs. Towseltuft is with him now—old Towseltuft's rich widow, you know, once his housekeeper."

"What! that old woman I saw here with the large bag in her hand and two great warts on her face?" inquired young Grundy.

"The same, sir. She's beforehand with you, and a precious hard job he'll have of it," answered Stumps, giving a side nod and wink towards the entrance of Cackle's room. "C. G.'s met his match this time.

Why, lor, sir, she's been into the 'mausoleous' seven times a'ready; retreated, as I may call it militarily, seven times, sir; and she's now going in again. In my opinion, sir, C. G. 's met his match in her. There, just hear her," exclaimed Stumps, slapping his knee, and then, raising his hand, he placed the four fingers perpendicularly behind his ear, and worked the back part of his head about in the greasy collar of his office coat. "Just hear her, sir; if she ain't into the 'mausoleous' again!"

"Mausoleous, Stumps! what do you mean?" asked Tobias.

"It's the item of disagreement, sir, between her and C. G.," returned Stumps, still keeping his hand to his ear and listening intently, "*in re* old Towseltufts 'funereal rights,' as she call 'em, sir; but, rights or wrongs, so expensive, she says. He had the management," continued Stumps, alluding to his master; "I made out the account, sir, and the mausoleous is entered at 250 golden pieces of the coin of this realm. Just fancy, 250 for a berrin' stone!"

"Oh, you mean a mausoleum, Stumps, I suppose?"

"Maybe," answered Stumps; "wrote it as mausoleous."

"Look it out, Stumps," said young Grundy, and going to the book-shelves, he took down and handed to

him a large, thick work, in which the meaning of words was explained to those seeking such information.

Stumps opened the book, and, having moistened his thumb, turned over the leaves with it until he arrived at the page where the word in question was set down, when running his finger up the column, he stopped.

“Well, Stumps, what do you find?”

“You’re right, Mr. Tobias, sir; ’tis mausoleum, a pompous funereal monument;” and Stumps closed the volume with a smack which sent the accumulated dust of years into the face of the young Tobias, who had been peering over his shoulder, and caused him to give forth a violent sneeze.

“That’s it!” continued Stumps in triumph, “that’s it! Why, sir, they’ve reared over old Towseltuft an erection as big as a house. I wonder he can rest in his grave — such a careful old gent as he was in his lifetime, and now with that weight on the top on him! But we never know what we may come to at last! And they’ve likewise put on all sorts of engraven’ and carven’ which——”

Here the altercation in the adjoining room rose to such a pitch, that Tobias, actuated by the laudable curiosity always dormant in him, stepped across the office on tiptoe, saying, “I’ll just peep in, Stumps, just peep, to see whether he’s likely to be long.” Without waiting for a reply, he opened the green baize door so

softly that he was not heard — if, indeed, he could have been had he taken less care — and thrust his face into the aperture. In this way he commanded a good view of the legal sanctum, and could distinctly hear all the particulars of the subject on which his kinsman and Mrs. Towseltuft were then engaged in high dispute. There the learned Doctor sat, surrounded by his papers and books, the former tied in bundles similar to those under the clerk's charge, but looking more imposing; and other documents relating to weightier matters were doubtless stored in the padlocked japanned tin boxes which stood piled in every available space by the walls. They were all conspicuously marked with white letters in front, and on four of them upon which the light was more particularly thrown, the admiring Tobias could read "Walrus Towseltuft Esq^{re}," "Pamby Pops Exōrs," "The Mildew Estate," and "The Trustees of Dame Phœbe Primmett's Charity;" and on a fifth, rather puzzling at first, he soon made out the important word "Miscellaneous." The books were arranged in handsome glazed cases, occupying nearly two sides of the room; only a select few, chiefly relating to the law of marriage and the dissolution thereof, lay on a table within reach of the Doctor's hand. A high carved chimney-piece half filled a third side of the apartment; and a much worn square bit of carpeting covered the middle of the floor, leaving the greater part of the old

worm-eaten oaken boards exposed to view. The windows were dull from neglect and dirt, allowing but a sombre light to penetrate within; though the whole place was brightened up, at the present moment, by the blaze of a cheerful fire in the antique semicircular grate, which the Doctor kept incessantly supplying with small modicums of coal from a receptacle standing on the floor near him. He was seated in a shabby arm-chair, covered with what had once been mulberry-coloured leather, but now in some places deepened to a black hue by grease and use, and in others chafed perfectly white, especially at the elbows; for it was from this (according to his admirers) embryo woolsack that he always gave forth his opinions. Yes, there he sat—that learned man, whom Stumps delighted, in his familiar, playful way, to denominate “C. G.,” but scarcely to be recognised as the same individual portrayed by us when walking in close companionship with the younger Grundy, now stealing unawares upon his privacy. Those cheerful and brilliant sallies in which he then indulged were no longer to be heard—that eye, then lighted up with merriment, now expressed deep thought and eagerness for argument—those lips, around which the smile of pleasant sarcasm so often played, were now firmly set, as if gathering strength for bitter rhetoric or killing irony. In fact, so powerfully stern was the expression of his countenance, that Tobias drew

a long breath at the sight, and felt proud of the new qualities he seemed to discover in his kinsman.

Nearly in front of him sat Mrs. Towseltuft, with one closed hand resting on the table, while, with the other, she kept continually diving into the large black bag, now lying open upon her lap, to bring out her handkerchief as before, or a small purple bottle, full of some revivifying essence, to apply to her nostrils. Her rubicund face wore a deeper flush than ever, from the energy she displayed in the heat of argument, and was ornamented with the two excrescences noticed by the observant Tobias, one of which grew on her right cheek, and the other close to the lower part of her nose. Bands of smooth tawny-coloured hair, with a broad white parting, adorned her forehead, forming a pleasing contrast to the thick, wiry, iron-grey brows shading her eyes. An immense head-dress of extraordinary fashion was perched above, and her form was enveloped in a black cloak, from beneath which, as she sat, there shot out a pair of determined-looking high shoes, thickly soled. Truly, as Stumps observed, "A hard job C. G. seemed likely to have of it!"

"But, madam," said the Doctor, continuing the animated conversation going on when Tobias opened the door, "if you remember, you said that you would leave the funereal rites of my late respected friend and client Towseltuft to my discretion, to do, in fact, as I wished

in the matter. If you remember, you were too afflicted to—to——”

“It’s all very well, Mr. Grundy,” interrupted Mrs. Towseltuft. “I don’t object, even if I could, to the other charges and expenses in your account; but”—and here the affectionate widow unfolded a large square sheet of paper, and, pointing with her finger to an item about midway down the many entries upon it, continued—“two hundred and fifty for a ‘mausoleous,’—it’s enuff to make him rise from his grave at the expense, poor man!”

“It’s of Carrara marble, madam, the purest Carrara that could be procured,” returned Grundy, in an apologetic tone of voice.

“I don’t care what career it is, Mr. Grundy,” quickly replied Mrs. Towseltuft. “It’s too much money, that it is, and without some reduction is made, I oughtn’t to pay it. I never could authorise, and I should think justice would never allow, that money to be spent on this”—again she paused to glance at the obnoxious item, and in a sonorous tone said — “mausoleous.”

Cackle now turned very red, and was about to respond rather warmly, when, happening to look round, his eyes rested on the tip of young Toby’s nose, as it lay tranquilly against the edge of the half-opened door. He immediately rose from his seat, and saying to Mrs. Towseltuft, “one moment, madam,” he stealthily sidled

round the table, pretending to search among the books there for some volume bearing on the question. But, as if not finding what he sought, he advanced to the side of the bookcase near the doorway, which having approached, he swiftly placed his fingers on the handle of the door, and suddenly closed it, nearly catching young Grundy's organ of smelling between the door and the stall.

Tobias drew back with a jump and a sneeze, instinctively laying his hand upon the feature which had just had the good fortune to escape an uncomfortable squeeze, and turning round, he saw Stumps, quietly smiling at C. G.'s sharp rebuke.

"Nearly had you there, sir," said that worthy man. "C. G.'s very quick, but you were quicker this time, I must say."

"Well, Stumps, you know that I only wanted to learn how long he would be engaged. It's likely to be some time, I see, so I'll take another stroll."

"I think so, Mr. Tobias. You saw, she's into the mausoleous, leastways mausoleum, again. Number nine."

"Ah! well, I'll return shortly," said Tobias, and he was leaving the room, when, as he opened the door, something appeared to occur to his ever active mind, and turning back, though still retaining his hold upon the door handle, he inquired, "How did that affair of young Musseldew and Miss Waitjoy end?"

“Oh! all right, Mr. Tobias; he gammoned her, sir.”

“How, Stumps?” asked young Grundy, closing the door and advancing close to the desk again.

“Why, when young Musseldew heard her proposition, he generously, as *he* called it,” said the clerk, giving a side nod towards his master’s room, “declared that all the property he had, if he should die first, should be hers, and gave directions to that effect, Mr. Tobias.”

“Generous fellow, Stumps.”

“Well, Mr. Tobias, sir, that’s as may be, but considerin’ all his estates and money might be put in a nutshell, and he’s nothin’ but debts to settle on her, I can’t see it in that light. However, he’s a friend of the Doctor’s, and it answered his purpose. She melted immediately, as you may say, flung herself into his arms, and he had it all his own way. C. G. suggested that her estates should go after the manner of ‘Borough English,’ and, in default, a will, as he said, to be equal in generosity to him.”

“What is ‘Borough English’?” asked Tobias, with some eagerness.

“Well, sir, as far as my learnin’ goes, it’s this way. If a feme sole, having estates, marries and has issue, Mr. Tobias, and should such issue die, and the father survives both them and the former feme sole, he has the income of the estates.”

“Then there must be children, eh, Stumps?”

“Why, yes, to inherit under the Borough,” returned Stumps; “but, you see, in young Musseldew’s case ’tis much of a muchness: he’ll have it any way, and Miss Waitjoy was smoothed over about the Borough. So they had me in to take instructions for the draft. Oh! he’s a ’cute ’un!” exclaimed the clerk in conclusion, evidently alluding to his employer.

Tobias Grundy, having obtained this valuable legal information, bade Stumps good-bye, and once more sought amusement for a short time in sauntering through the neighbouring streets. But finding nothing to interest him there, and being thoroughly worn out with fatigue and disappointment at failing to see his kinsman, it occurred to him that he would take some sustenance in lieu of his dinner, the accustomed hour for which had passed by unheeded. He entered a shop, therefore, where refreshments of divers kinds could be had on the instant; and, first smiling benignantly on the female waiter, he seated himself, and directed his attention and appetite to a dish of small meat pasties. Several of these he devoured with a keen relish, washing them down with a flagon of good old sparkling ale; then gracefully wiping his mouth with his kerchief, he gave the attendant the price of the viands with another smile, and left the establishment, fully determined upon making a third and last effort to

acquaint Cackle with the intelligence which he deemed of such moment.

He had approached within a few paces of the house, when he perceived the manager of the stables standing at the gate, charger in hand, awaiting the advent of his master.

Now the Doctor was a good judge of a horse, and liked to be thought so. It was one of the little infirmities, or rather vanities, of that great man, and the animal now led out for him to bestride did not belie the soundness of his judgment. It was of a small, compact frame, rather below the standard height, but strong and short-barrelled: the head of a noble Roman contour, showing excessive high breeding in that way; the nose almost approaching to a curve, too much so perhaps for a fastidious taste. A pair of short, decided-looking ears were planted jauntily on his head, and a white streak ran in a well-marked line from between them to the tip of his upper lip. His grey eyes flashed with fire and restlessness; his legs might be thought a trifle too short and puffy, and the horned excrescences upon them too numerous for a strict connoisseur to admire; but, as the Doctor once said to a criticising friend, "Who is perfect, whether man or horse? and strength, sir, strength, that's what I look at!" The coat of the steed was smooth and of a handsome cream colour, dappled here and there with

sufficiently large patches of brown, commonly called piebald. His tail was set high on his rump, and, to give him a classical appearance, like to the animals chiselled on the ancient marbles, his mane had been cropped close to his neck. Take him altogether, he was a noble creature; and as he pawed the ground and arched his neck, one seemed to desire nothing better than to mount so gallant a charger, and ride him to the death.

Dr. Grundy now came forth from his gate, clad in an overcoat made of some thick material covered with long, coarse black hair. He had a cap or head-dress to match, tied under his chin to protect him from the chilliness of the evening air, and his legs were encased in leather. A smile was on his face (probably he had carried the "mausoleous" at last), as he drew on his gloves, and placing his hand on the horse's shoulder vaulted lightly upon his back. The groom let go his hold, and, with a demi-vault which sent the half-seated Doctor nearly out of the saddle, the beast went caracoling down the street; Grundy, in pure absence of mind, encouraging its paces by unconsciously digging his long spurs into its sides.

Before he turned the corner of the street, first a cap of deep cerulean hue, then a face, and then a long neck, were thrust out from a doorway, and a pair of eyes followed, with eager looks, the retreating form .

of the legal equestrian. The owner, as need scarcely be said, was no other than the young Tobias. He was amazed, for where could the Doctor be going? He well knew the custom of his great kinsman was to take his daily rides before the matin hour, and now to go forth late in the afternoon! Some business of importance must be astir, and after a moment's thought he determined to follow and watch his movements.

Totally unconscious of being pursued, the Doctor directed his way leisurely through the streets towards the suburbs of the city, and, having cleared them, urged his steed into a gentle amble. Tobias gave way to despair, lest he should be put to his best paces; for, being duly acquainted with the pure Arab descent of this present reigning favourite in Cackle's stables, he feared the trot would grow into a swift gallop, and he would be out of sight in a few seconds. But fortune befriended him. The Doctor was in contemplative mood, and the amble soon became a walk again, then changed to an amble for a short distance, so that his pursuer, without much exertion and in spite of his boots, contrived to keep him in sight. After proceeding in this way for about four miles, he came to a small village, and rode up to the door of the principal hostelry in the place, bearing the sign of "The Crocodile in the Bush." There he pulled up, and throwing the reins to a countryman lounging

on a bench outside, who acted as ostler, told him to take the horse round to the stables and give him a double feed of corn; for Grundy seemed to be in a good mind and desirous of showering blessings on all around him. He now entered the house, and walking into the best apartment, where there was a bright wood fire, rang the bell, which caused a round-faced, buxom lass, bearing a candle, to appear. Putting this down on a table, when she saw him she exclaimed :

“Lauk ! Mr. Grundy, sir ! We’re so glad to see you again ; you’re allust a welcome, you are, sir, I’m sure. What shall I bring you ?”

“A glass of spirits-and-water, strong and cold, my dear,” answered Grundy, slapping his leathers with his riding-whip. “And in the mean time I’ll just refresh myself with this,” he added, as, suddenly going up to the damsel, he imprinted a kiss upon her rosy lips.

The girl coloured up, and drew the back of her hand across her mouth ; but she was no doubt used to the great man’s ways, for she did not appear to be offended, and only said, “Lauk ! Mr. Grundy, how can you ? Oh Mr. Cackle Grundy, I never did see the likes o’ you,” and immediately left the room to do his bidding.

Cackle stretched his legs before the fire, as he stood with his back towards it, and slightly tapping the sides of his legs again with his whip, a succession of smiles played over his countenance, now so altered from what it was a

few short hours before. The versatility of the man was something wonderful. At times the gravity on his brow and depth of thought in his brain made him seem as if capable of grasping the conduct of empires; at others the half Italian, half French lightness of his manner would leave an impression of his being nothing more than a mere idle, careless banterer; but now the softness yet fire of the Spaniard seemed to possess him, and well became him too.

The girl quickly returned with the glass of strong drink ordered by him, which he took from her hand with easy grace, and tossed off the contents at a draught; when, having again saluted her, which indeed she half courted, he gave her a piece of money, a groat more than the legal charge, as she found to her great pleasure. He next divested himself of his leggings, spurs, and shaggy overcoat, and exchanged his cap for a hat of the newest fashion, which he took from a little cupboard by the fireplace where it seemed to be kept in reserve for occasions like the present; then leaving the inn, he proceeded for some little distance down the road, till he arrived at a large gateway flanked by granite posts. This he entered, and walked up a carriage-drive leading to a tall red-bricked house, the principal door of which was reached by a flight of stone steps. Cackle paused a minute before he ascended these with measured tread, but no sooner was he at the

top than he gave a gentle though lengthened and becoming knock at the massive portal.

A few moments afterwards, Tobias also turned into the drive.

CHAPTER V.

THE door was opened to Doctor Grundy's knock by a female domestic, of whom he inquired whether her mistress were at home, which being answered in the affirmative (as our wily diplomatist well knew beforehand it would be), he stepped lightly into the vestibule of the mansion. There he deposited his hat, gloves, and riding-whip on a table, and again delayed for a short while, to put a few finishing touches to his toilet: pulling up and adjusting the collar and tie round his throat, pushing his hair forward on both sides of his head by the aid of a small comb which he drew forth from the pocket of his vest, and switching away with his kerchief any little particles of dust gathered on his boots during his walk. These arrangements satisfactorily completed, he gave a slight cough, and following the servant, who threw the door of the eating-room wide open, presented himself at the entrance with that *débonnaire* yet softened manner which had characterised his conduct for the last hour or so.

Near the centre of the saloon stood a lady of the middle height in stature, and of appropriate age. Her form, inclining to *embonpoint*, was attired in black silk, falling in heavy folds to her feet, one of which, somewhat plump and square, peeped from beneath the skirts of her robe. Her bust was concealed by the upper part of her dress, loosely fashioned there, according to the then prevailing mode; and on her neck and full throat was placed a head fit to be limned by a painter of the oldest school. The forehead was high, though inclining to be narrow, with a pair of restless dark eyes beneath, ever roving and scintillating; the nose rather short, and, if anything, disposed to thickness; and the whole finished off by a mouth and chin of uncommon beauty — the former a little large perhaps, with the upper teeth too, at least those that remained, slightly projecting, owing to the prominence of the jaw; and the latter full, round, and determined, yet feminine to a degree. On each side of her florid, olive-tinted cheeks fell long silken tresses, dark as the raven's wing, fashioned by her tirewoman's aid into undulating ringlets reaching to her shoulders; and, to crown her charms, she wore upon her head a tiara of Utrecht velvet, in the front of which was pinned a brilliant of rare value. Such in person and attire was Mistress Lucretia Oldwriggle, as she stood in her luxuriant loveliness to welcome her courteous visitor.

As Cackle advanced towards her, she stretched forth a rounded arm, set off with a massive bracelet on the wrist, which a sculptor well might covet for his model (if he ever travelled that way), and presented her hand to him. He clasped it eagerly, and as he bowed over it, in the depth of his devotion, raised it to his lips, and imprinted on the back a loud impassioned kiss. Hardly had the sound died away when it was repeated as by an echo. Cackle started, drew back his head quickly, and looked round the room.

“It’s only Warbles,” said Lucretia, in a soft, low voice.

“Warbles?” inquired the confused Doctor.

“The parrot,” replied the lady. “I teach him to salute me in return for his daily food; and hearing your greeting, he has repeated it — stupid bird!”

“Oh!” said Cackle, and leading the lady gracefully to a couch near them, he placed her on it, and, sitting down by her side, was again about to raise her hand to his lips; but when in the act of bending his noble head over it, apparently remembering the imitative powers of the parrot, at which he rapidly glanced, he gently dropped it with a warm pressure, and sighed out, “My Lucretia!”

“My Cacklums!” she returned, with a responsive balmy sigh.

“My idol!”

“My Cacklums!” repeated Lucretia, in a softer tone.

“My delight!”

“My Cacklums!” again said Lucretia, her voice this time nearly inaudible from emotion.

“After this day of weary labour,” said the Doctor, “how am I repaid by finding myself in thy dear presence!” And here “Cacklums” stole his arm round the somewhat swelling waist of his “idol,” and, drawing her affectionately to him, began to converse with her in low and tender accents.

The saloon where the lovers sat was furnished with the most exquisite taste. Conversation couches, like that on which they rested, and chairs of every variety of shape and make, were scattered about it, in an approved style of orderly confusion. A table, of the most expensive mahogany, was placed in the centre; another smaller one, covered with a white damask cloth, stood on one side; and a handsome musical instrument, then much in vogue, occupied the further end of the room. Pictures of the best and worst masters—for Lucretia had a liberal spirit—hung upon the walls, and conspicuous among them was a full-length portrait of herself, and another of Rondo Bounce, Esquire, sometime Mayor of Humdrum, representing him, with a roll of papers in one hand, and the other extended, as in the act of making one of his celebrated political speeches; and these paintings were interspersed with large mirrors, reflecting on all sides the form of the gazer. A magni-

ficent carpet, of Eastern manufacture, covered the floor, and fauteuils of costly material and workmanship were dotted here and there upon its variegated surface. Some rare exotics, in full bloom, were tastefully arranged near the oriel window, not far from which, on a small stand, was the gilded wire cage containing the parrot—the only object, perhaps, on which the Doctor's eye did not rest with pleasure, in the many admiring glances he sent round the apartment.

An hour slipped by, seeming to the lovers but as a moment, when Cackle, fondly pressing the hand of Lucretia, asked permission to lead her to the musical instrument. To this request she assented with a grace peculiar to herself, and, rising from the couch, was led across the room by the gallant Doctor. She then seated herself on a high stool, and, looking tenderly upon him, asked what she should play.

“If I'm not demanding too much of you,” said Cackle, “would you gratify me by playing the overture to the opera of ‘Titus desperato’?”

Lucretia, running her fingers over the keys of the instrument, and striking a few chords by way of prelude, commenced that celebrated overture. As she proceeded, the lightness of her touch and the rapidity of her execution, combined with the delightful harmony, so excited the admiring listener, that he began unconsciously to sway himself to and fro, like a reed waving

in the summer breezes, and to hum in unison with the varied cadences; till, as she approached the finale of the piece, his accompaniment was almost as loud and energetic as the music itself. No wonder, indeed! for this evening, as if to rivet the chains of the Doctor still tighter, the fair player surpassed herself: she was more brilliant in her musical powers, more winning in her manner than usual, which, added to her many personal attractions, left the companion by her side entranced with sweet emotions.

“Brava! brava! thanks! Lucretia, thanks!” he exclaimed when she had finished, gently patting his fingers against each other in subdued plaudits.

The door now opened, and the servants entered with the evening repast, which they placed upon the centre table, and, informing their mistress that it was served, left the room. Lucretia arose, and, again giving her hand to Cackle, was led to a chair which, with high-bred ease, he set ready for her reception; then having taken his own seat, he opened and threw a napkin of damask across his knees, and, gently rubbing his hands together, cast his eyes over the well-spread table.

“Merely a cold collation, you see,” said Lucretia; “it’s all before you.”

A cold collation indeed it was, but one that an anchorite might have left his cell to enjoy, or a gourmet have died of despair only to look at.

Immediately before the Doctor stood a dish of some description of fish, looking like an island, surrounded by a sea of cockle sauce. An open pasty made up of rabbit's limbs and herrings, flavoured with mushrooms, formed the centre dish, and behind it, placed as it were in ambuscade, for a surprise, were some baked apples, stewed with spices in treacle, — a dish requiring excellent cunning in the cookery to bring it to perfection, and an especial favourite with Cackle. Two side dishes, the one of pigeons stuffed with preserved cherries and stewed in diluted essence of garlic, the other a large tart covered with a creamy, frothy substance, completed this *recherché* little feast; and, to give zest to the enjoyment of it, there stood, on either hand of the Doctor, an elegant cut glass decanter, filled with a lightish coloured wine, and an open silver tankard, containing some black-looking beverage.

After the attentive lover had assisted Lucretia to some of the pasty—for she did not much affect the dish of fish, upon which he began his operations—the pair remained some little time in silence. The previous conversation and the musical exercise, following upon his evening ride, had given Cackle an appetite, and the lady showed admirable discretion in offering no interruption to his enjoyment of the delicate viands she had caused to be set before him. When she had finished her plate of pasty, he took the stopper from the de-

canter of wine, grasped it by the neck, and poured some into her glass; then filling his own to the brim, he said, looking lovingly at her the while, "My enchantress!" and drank it off at a gulp.

One has perhaps seen, at a race, the countenance of a well-mounted rider, when, gradually distancing all others, he is suddenly thrown from his saddle, within a few yards of the winning post, by his horse slipping and straining his leg; or that of a youth when, in the full enjoyment of a long looked-for holiday, while careering along exultingly in his new-fledged liberty, he finds himself immersed unawares in a hidden pool of muddy water: but the expression of blank dismay on their faces could not surpass that which showed itself on Cackle's visage the moment after his draught. He closed his eyes firmly, then opened them to their utmost width. His mouth was drawn up as tight as a miser's purse, and he moved uneasily on his chair, as he instinctively conveyed his left hand to the knot confining the kerchief round his throat, and pulled at it convulsively. He uttered not a word for a few moments, which mysterious conduct altogether caused Lucretia, who was in the act of raising her glass to her lips, to replace it gently on the table, and to regard her lover with some anxiety.

At last he found his speech, and looking at his mistress said:

“What wine is this, Lucretia?”

“It is of the vintage of Southern Africa,” she answered, with a bland smile, “and much commended to me by the merchant. Thy palate likes it not, perhaps.”

“It’s too potent for me, my dearest,” he moaned out, and, without saying more, seized the tankard, carried it to his lips, and buried his face in its contents. His draught from this was long and vigorous, though not without a wry face at the taste of even that beverage; however, it seemed to relieve him, and he applied himself somewhat reassured to the delicacies before him. He helped himself liberally from the centre dish, trifled with the froth-covered tart at the side, pressing now and then a portion of either upon his lovely companion. Presently, with a quick movement of her rounded arm and hand, she placed the dish of apples and its sauce suddenly before her lover. For a moment his eyes met hers with a look of passionate fondness at her considerate thoughtfulness; then dropping them, to gloat with appetising delight on the *bonne bouche*, he hastily took up a spoon, plunged it into the dish, and after asking permission to assist her, which she declined, helped himself to a large portion of it.

This disappeared, and a second time he filled his plate, and ate long in silence. When he had finished he was about to apply himself again to the wine, but its effects upon him were too fresh in his remembrance, and

he took another draught from the tankard instead; then, having wiped his mouth with the napkin in a delicate and proper manner, he sank back upon his chair in a delicious state of gastronomic contentment, and dreamily fixed his half-shut eyes on Lucretia, with an indescribable gaze.

The lady now rose to ring the bell for the servants to remove the cloth; but Cackle restrained her with gentle eagerness, and hastened to perform that office himself. The summons was quickly answered; and while the table was being cleared, the Doctor followed with his eyes the empty dish off which he had experienced so much happiness. Some decanters of strong liquids, water, and two glasses were then placed on the table, and the domestics withdrew, leaving the pair once more to themselves.

The considerate Grundy lost no time in making a mixture in the glasses. He placed one before his mistress, and having taken a sip from his own, which appeared to please him much, he rubbed his hands slowly over each other, and, looking fondly at Lucretia, said:

“This is my paradise—do with me what you will, my charmer;” and taking another large mouthful of the mixture, he asked, “What will my charmer do with her Cackle?”

“Stick ’em up agin the wall!” screamed a voice;

and the words were followed by a soft chuckle, exactly like those to which the Doctor had now and then given vent during the evening in the fulness of his enjoyment.

Cackle started back, and the deep crimson flush of anger came over his face.

“That naughty bird!” exclaimed Lucretia, reprovingly, and looking at the parrot. “He repeats words which he hears from the gardener. The lad who helps him is in the habit of leaving his tools about the walks carelessly, and has frequently to be admonished and told to place them in a careful and proper position. Naughty Warbles!”

Cackle accepted the explanation with something like a grunt, looking at the bird—which was now industriously calling itself “pretty Poll”—with not the most amiable expression on his countenance, and remained silent for some minutes.

But gradually he resumed his accustomed manner, and said, as he stretched out his arms towards his mistress:

“Oh, Lucretia! tell me, when may I look forward to calling all this loveliness my own?”

Lucretia cast down her eyes, and reddened to the edge of her tiara.

“Say when—say now!” pleaded her lover, with much warmth.

“Why so premature?” said Lucretia, softly. “A few months later—I will consider——”

“Oh! talk not of months, my angel,” returned the enamoured Grundy; “let my love plead for me.” Here he sank upon one knee, and, taking her hand in his, said with fervour:

“Delay not my happiness, Lucretia — be not obdurate! Have not my pleadings impressed your heart — these impassioned words ——”

“Cart ’em along with t’other rubbish!” interrupted a voice, as clear as a bell.

Cackle sprang to his feet.

“Warbles! Warbles! this is really too bad. Oh, naughty bird! he must go to bed. He has been impressed, no doubt, with the gardener’s reproofs to that lad for allowing heaps of decayed vegetation to remain on the walks. Cover him up in his cage; he will then be silent.”

Cackle stepped across the room, and, going to the side-table already mentioned, drew off the white cloth, with which to envelope the cage. He approached it for that purpose, and raised the cloth to the full extent of his arms. Warbles, in the mean time, had been eyeing him curiously, winking and blinking at him, dropping the grey film over his eyes, and scratching the side of his head with one of his claws, as if considering what the manœuvre meant. Cackle now drew near, but with much caution; and, when in the act of “putting him to bed,” Warbles screamed out “Good night, old boy—

good night, old boy !” and, giving vent to a long whistle, edged off his perch to the side of the cage, and made a ferocious dig with his beak at Cackle’s fingers, which the indignant Doctor barely escaped by quickly throwing the cloth over the cage and springing back from it. He turned round, and, seeing that Lucretia was not observing him, shook his fist at the shrouded parrot ; and there was that in his eye which boded no good to that intelligent bird, if, in the course of events, it should ever become his property.

“The parting salutation of the lad to his instructor,” now said Lucretia, alluding to the last effort of Warbles. “He’s a rude, uncouth boy, and next week I shall discharge him. Warbles learns bad manners and language from him, and in the servants’ hall, where he is generally kept in the evening—which must not be, must it, Warbles?” and she glanced affectionately at the draped prison-house of her favourite. She had not seen the Doctor’s pantomime a few minutes before—luckily for him !—nor knew how wickedly his thoughts were even then occupied, in wishing the bird were in a less comfortable place of abode than the servants’ hall.

Cackle now returned to his seat ; but, whether the objectionable drinks which he had swallowed, or Lucretia’s seeming coldness, or the parrot’s *mal-à-propos* remarks, or perhaps a combination of the whole, affected him, his gallant bearing had quite disappeared.

It was in vain that Lucretia exerted all her fascinating powers to win him back to his former self, and even delicately attempted more than once to renew their tender converse. Cackle was irretrievably out of sorts, and soon made preparations for his departure.

“Leave me not yet,” said the lady in her softest accents.

“I must begone, dearest madam,” answered the dispirited Grundy, and taking her hand, he imprinted on it a parting kiss, but silently, as a glance towards the enveloped cage indicated his fears that another mocking repetition of his salute might follow any loud ebullition of feeling. He retreated to the door without another word, and hastily taking his hat and whip from the table in the vestibule, and bestowing a large silver coin upon the expectant waiting-maid, he passed through the outer portal, closing it behind him with a bang.

Now it must be known that, from the time of the Doctor's entrance into the presence of Lucretia, a witness had been stationed near, who had seen and heard nearly all that passed between those lovers. Tobias, after having watched Cackle safely into the house, had turned the corner of it, and observing some rays of light from a large window, naturally betook himself there to espy what might be passing within. He discovered that the light streamed through a convenient wide crevice in the shutters of this window, and the curtains luckily not

being drawn, he planted himself by it, and was thus enabled to witness the reception, the musical performance, the supper (such a Barmecide's feast to him), and the commencement of his kinsman's amorous endearments; but he was so overcome by these, thinking indeed of his own love passages with a certain damsel, that he feared to betray himself by remaining to witness so much bliss, and retreated from the window some little way upon the lawn. He there threw himself on a garden-bench, and, folding his arms, sat for a short time lost in contemplation, as he gazed at the moon, now high in the heavens. He thus gradually recovered his calmness, and, determined to see the end of the adventure, he arose and resumed his observations. He advanced cautiously to the window, screwed his eye to the old aperture, and looked round the room. It was now empty, though the lights were still burning, for Cackle had only just departed. Tobias drew away his head, and thinking his eye might be affected by the overstraining it had undergone, and by the night air, he wiped it with his handkerchief, and, again screwing himself into a proper position, endeavoured to explore the now vacant apartment with a more searching glance.

O Tobias! little dost thou know what punishment thy curiosity will entail upon thee!

Cackle, who had now rounded the corner of the house, in no very serene state of mind, was startled by the

sight of the young man's shadow cast sideways on the ground. At first he stopped thunderstruck ; then looking to ascertain who made it, he at once recognised his young kinsman in the person of his spy. Without a moment's hesitation, he moved rapidly over the ground that intervened between them, and just as Tobias was stooping and wriggling himself into an attitude most suitable to the gratification of his curiosity, he laid his hand heavily and firmly on his shoulder, as he exclaimed in his ear, "Traitor !" The detected young Grundy appeared paralysed. He kept his position for a moment, as if he were cut in marble ; then, with an effort, he regained an upright posture, twisted round, and looked his stern discoverer full in the face. Cackle fastened his hand instantaneously on the slight silken band, or tie, worn by him, like all other youthful gallants, round the throat. A guardian angel to thee, Tobias, that frail yoke ! for, with a jerk back, which broke the band in twain, he released himself from his disagreeable position ; and giving one fierce glare at his indignant relative, he bounded aside out of his reach, turned towards the city, and fled over the green sward with the swiftness of an antelope.

Cackle bestowed a glance full of meaning at the narrow band which he held in his hand, and, muttering deep curses at its frailty, dashed it to the ground, pulled his hat more firmly over his noble forehead, and,

drawing a long breath, was immediately in pursuit of his inquisitive kinsman.

Tobias at once made for the extremity of the park-like enclosure, where he had noticed a gap in the hedge when he was following the Doctor to the house. His powers of remembrance served him well, and he passed rapidly through, crossed the road, mounted the opposite hedge, and was soon careering over the field on the other side. It was a masterly movement, but observed at once by his subtle pursuer, who followed his footsteps like a bloodhound, somewhat slow perhaps, but not the less sure. After passing this field and two or three more, which Tobias did not effect without some loss of clothes, shredded off from catching in the hedges as he scrambled through, he became aware that his boots, the pride of his leisure walking hours, were now a positive hindrance to him. Like to the deer mentioned in some fable, whose antlers, the ornament and beautifier of his stately head, proved to be his destruction at last, so these boots, highly prized by the youthful Grundy, seemed about to lead him into grave misfortune. But the blind goddess, ever fickle in her favours, now interfered in behalf of our fugitive. In jumping off a high fence, the top of which he had gained with much suffering and endeavour, he alighted so heavily on the ground, that his boots, previously weakened in the closing stitches by overstraining, now fairly gave way, with a crack. An ejacu-

lation of delight, at the relief, broke forth from Tobias as with renewed vigour he took up his running and gradually increased the distance between himself and Cackle, who, toiling and labouring to a degree, in his heavy though useful boots, now followed at a greater disadvantage. Yet he kept on and on, determined not to yield, his perseverance alone giving him many chances in favour of his overtaking the young fugitive.

They had now left the fields, and were in the main road of the suburbs of the city. All was still, except an occasional late goer-to-bed, who, hearing the running, opened his window to look forth, and wondered what was going on so late when he saw the pair pass by so swiftly and silently. They entered the city, and here the stones interfered with Tobias, cutting his feet through the interstices of his boots; and Cackle's thick and useful ones were again telling in the chase: he was not more than fifty yards in arrear. All appeared lost to the young man, and as he glanced over his shoulder, and saw the near approach of the Doctor, he prepared to deliver himself over to the vengeance of that justly enraged man. He made one last effort, and puffing out his remaining wind to the utmost, he turned into a smoother side street, forgetful of a toll-gate midway there. But fortune again favoured him. Just then it stood wide open, and, dashing past the keeper as he was in the act of closing it, he was through in a moment. The man

looked after him, and, being so startled, let go his hold on the gate, and it swung back on its hinges. With a curse, he swiftly ran to seize hold again, and hearing other footsteps coming the same way, thinking he should be cheated of his toll a second time, he slammed it to without delay. The same instant Cackle came full breast against it in his mad career—he was just too late.

“No, master, one’s enough for one day—or rayther night: *yer* pay, if *yer* please.”

“Open the gate, fellow,” said Cackle, as well as he could from want of breath. “I’ll send to-morrow—my servant——”

“No, no, that cock ’ont fight, master. *Yer* pay, or *yer* don’t go thru’ this here night, ’bor, I can tell *yer*,” returned the toll-keeper, in a dogged tone.

Cackle, seeing it was of no avail to parley with such a person, and being well aware it was a long distance to go round, heaved a sigh, and, feeling in his pocket, found a coin, which he handed to the man, who looked at it by the light of the lantern which he carried in his hand. It was gold; and a certain amount of respect now appeared in his manner, as he began a kind of rough apology for his previous behaviour. This was speedily cut short by Cackle, who said snappishly:

“Now, man, be quick—the change. I can’t wait here all night.”

“Man to yer!” exclaimed the toll-keeper, surlily.

“Now then, fellow—quick!” said Cackle, impatiently, irritated to the last degree by the delay and the man’s incivility.

“No more feller than yer. If yer inclined to be snasty, I’m inclined to be snasty tu, and so there’ll be a pair on us snasty. There’s yer change;” saying which, he pointed with his finger to some oblong brown paper cases containing copper coin, and a loose heap of small silver money lying beside them, which he had taken from a chest of drawers in his room.

“I’m not going to be bothered with that mass of metal, my man. Give me all silver, can’t you?” said the Doctor.

“Man to yer agin! I say, there’s yer change; and if yer don’t take it now, I’ll put it outside agin the door, and yer can take it or lave it, just as yer like.”

Cackle saw that the toll-keeper was obdurate, and not caring to leave the money, being somewhat of a mercenary and suspicious turn of mind, he heaved another profound sigh, and placed two of the papers in one side-pocket, and a third in the other; then opening the latter agape, the toll-keeper shot the loose change into it with a rattle, and, seeing him to the gate, let him through, and closed it, without even bidding him good night; merely muttering, as

he looked after him, "Feller, indeed!" Once through, Cackle tried to get up a run, but finding himself overweighted with the coins, after the manner of a race-horse confined in the shafts of a heavy waggon, he gave it up, and went plodding on in weary silence: his feet churning up and down in his roomy boots; his mind distracted by various subjects, as he now vowed vengeance on Tobias, and then thought of his valuable steed left at the "Crocodile in the Bush," or wondered what his housekeeper (of whom he stood somewhat in awe) would say to his return home at that late hour of the night. The only bright gleams of sunshine in his horizon were his approaching nuptials with Lucretia, and the exposure, through his means, of the many scandals then being enacted in the city, but more especially that one in which figured the Stranger and the lady of the hill.

At last he reached his door, and admitting himself with a secret key, he dismissed the attendant groom with a few muttered words, indicating his services would not be required. He then pulled off his boots at the stairs' foot, and ascended to his bedroom with a lightened spirit, at finding the rest of his household had retired to repose. Full of thought, he slowly divested himself of his clothes, drew on his night head-dress, and, after restlessly tossing about on his bed of down for some little time, sank into a troubled sleep.

CHAPTER VI.

CACKLE awoke late the following morning, his head still aching from the effects of the last night's pleasant debauch. His mouth felt dry, his eyes were dim, and his dreams had been far from agreeable. The events of the previous day had haunted his mind. At one time it seemed to him that the widow of old Towsel-tuft was heaping a ponderous mausoleum upon his body, and he struggled in vain to free himself from it, till at length it assumed the form of his late respected friend and client himself, and crumbled away limb by limb. Then the scene changed, and, seated by Lucretia, he was about to clasp her in his arms, when she was transformed into a parrot, and flew away out of the window, screaming "Good night, old boy! good night, old boy!" He rushed madly after her; but looking round, to his horror and dismay, he found himself pursued by a huge bottle with the woolly head of a negro for a stopper, yet bearing a strange resemblance to Tobias. A hideous grin was on the phantom's face, as



Cackle's Dream.

over fields and hedges it careered after him; but, just as it stretched out some long, black, corkscrew-shaped arms to seize him, he saw a wide river before him, into which he plunged, and was borne rapidly down its current. From such fancies the Doctor at last entered again into the material world, and, after lying more than an hour to collect his thoughts, he slowly left his couch, and began dressing himself for the labours of the day. Having done so, he went down into his parlour, where breakfast had been laid out for him by his careful housekeeper. But his appetite was not as usual, and he merely trifled with the meats before him. When he had finished, he left the room, and, putting on his hat, just looked into the office, where Stumps sat, and said :

“Going out, Stumps : uncertain when I return.”

“Very well, sir,” replied the clerk. “If Mrs. Towseltuft should call ——”

An exclamation, very like an oath, fell from the lips of Cackle at that detested name, and stopped further questioning.

“Say I’m out, Stumps. Tell her to call next week, or any time after ;” and with these words, thrown back, in a manner, over his shoulder, he quitted the house. He had determined to walk to the village where he had left his horse and warm clothing on the preceding evening. But instead of turning his steps at once in the

direction he had then taken, he proceeded into the High Street (from caprice or otherwise, but probably in the hope of effecting a chance meeting with Tobias), and having the whole afternoon before him, he bethought himself that he would go for a stroll through the city, before he finally moved off into the country. He walked down the pavement with a jaunty air; but it would not do. Sundry nauseous feelings would get bodily uppermost, and he fell into a more subdued pace. When he gained the market-place, he crossed it, and placed himself under the archway, so well known as the gathering point for the city gallants, and stood there, as if waiting for some acquaintance-gossip to relieve the tedium of his thoughts. But he waited in vain. Whether those for whom he looked were gone from town, or taking some part in its traffick, none came near; and he was about to resume his walk, when he caught sight of some object on the other side of the square, which made his eyes glisten with delight, and gave new vigour to his whole frame. The sensation of oppression at once left him, and he felt himself again to be the man of the previous afternoon, before he undertook his ill-starred ride.

What could be the cause of this change in Cackle Grundy? Simply the sight of a lady, and she alone. But in order to account for her appearance at that lucky moment, and with suitable propriety to describe

this our heroine, Dame Cicely Target, we must go back for an hour or so in the course of our narrative.

In the centre of a garden on that retired hill we have before mentioned as having been regarded with interest by the two Grundys, there stood a lady, on the morning in question, with a little basket in her hand, culling the last flowers of autumn. The sun, which shone so brightly in the unclouded sky, could not cast its beams on a more lovely object. Her complexion was exquisitely fair, with a soft colour on her cheeks, as though she had stolen the tints from the lilies and roses of the past summer ere they faded away. She was tall in stature, but her form was so well rounded and proportioned as to render her real height less apparent than it would otherwise have been. Her hair, inclining to an auburn hue, was smoothly drawn over her fair and broad brow in bands which glistened like burnished gold. Her blue and liquid eyes, melting with tenderness, gave an unspeakably ravishing look as she glanced around her, while a sunbeam smile parted her small and pouting lips, disclosing a row of pearls set as it were in a coral bed, and, with the round, dimpled chin below, completed such charms as would seduce an anchorite from his vows and meditations. Her dress, of a dark colour and soft material, was daintily looped up on each side, displaying, beneath the richly embroidered petticoat, a foot and ankle which

could only match with her fair face and form ; and as she moved along the parterre, cutting a flower from one stem and then another, to deposit gracefully in her basket, she presented the idea of one of those bright beings of whom we dream in our earliest youth, — a vision which in our after years we seldom if ever find realised, — in fact, a poet's ideal, and a poet's ideal when he loves.

The lady filled her basket to the brim, and stood for some minutes lost in thought, with her eyes fixed on the ground, the silence in that retired spot broken only by the chirping of the birds and occasional humming of a stray humble bee. To look around, one would have imagined that nought but love and tranquillity reigned there supreme ; yet the demon spirit of Grundyism even now hovered around its walls, and had already planted its cankered foot upon the soil.

Presently there came from the house a neat hand-maiden, who addressed her mistress in a respectful tone, saying :

“Madam, the luncheon is on the table.”

“Thank you, Blinka,” returned Dame Cicely. “I almost need refreshment after my exertions of the morning ;” and she smiled sweetly as she gave her the basket, bidding her arrange its contents into a nosegay, and then entered the house, followed by the faithful domestic.

She went to her dining-room, and, taking off her little straw hat, sat down to partake of the slight refec-tion set ready for her there. When sufficiently refreshed, she proceeded to her chamber, where, having doffed her morning costume, she speedily arrayed herself for walking, in that tasteful manner for which she was noted. At the conclusion of her toilette, with excus-able vanity, she surveyed herself from head to foot in a large mirror; and, satisfied all was correct, she descended, gave some final orders to the attentive Blinka, and walked down the hill, to wend her way to the city, bent on that occupation in which all ladies of all ages have ever taken an especial delight—that is, to do some shopping.

It may be asked, why was this fair lady left to take care of herself amid the temptations of this great city? A plain circlet of gold on her finger betokened her to have been at one time wedded: was she a widow, or still a wife? She had not the forlorn look of a widow, or, at least, not of one recently bereaved. Why then alone? Does he who should guard such a treasure pass his time in the busy town, bending over a desk from morn to night to amass wealth far less precious? Or is he on board one of England's floating bulwarks, ever holding himself in readiness to do battle against the enemies of his country? No; but, forced by untoward events, he is away in a foreign land. A merchant,

truly, in the large sense of the word ; and his agents beyond the seas, not having his far-seeing and business-like habits, had encountered difficulties in the management of affairs in their particular provinces. Letters were useless, and at last he had left his home and wife, and had undertaken this long voyage, to rectify, by his presence and shrewdness of mind, that which his subordinates were unable to grasp. He had now been absent some months, and scandal, ever on the watch, had fixed its green eyes upon the lonely and spotless Dame Cicely, and made sport of her with its forked tongue ; but 'tis ever thus — the fairest deer in the herd is always marked by the hunters, the finest peach on the tree is sure to attract the wasps.

The lady sped onwards to the city. Occasionally she met acquaintances, who, with half-averted looks, scarce gave the recognition they dared not entirely refuse ; but, totally unconscious of their motives, she glided on calmly and proudly. She heeded neither their looks nor their demeanour, but, absorbed in her own affairs alone, passed by unscathed ; like the victim submitted to the ordeal of the hot ploughshares, escaping through her very purity, and in the end eliciting the sympathy and applauses of the spectators by her innocence.

At length Dame Cicely entered the mart-place, and met the gaze of Cackle. It was the sight which proved

the soothing medicine to him — this lady, and alone.

She soon turned into a large emporium set apart for the disposal of woman's gear and such like trifles. Cackle, forgetful of his horse and everything else, in the excitement of the moment, at having, as he thought, at last found his chance, recrossed the square and planted himself some yards from the shop. Watching the entrance closely out of the corner of his wary eye, although apparently only intent upon observing the citizens passing to and fro in their several occupations, he never for a moment left the spot. At length, after some little delay, which sorely tried the Doctor's patience, the lady reappeared and passed down the paved side-way, towards one of the principal streets leading to the lower part of the city. Cackle, with sauntering yet steady pace, followed her, priding himself upon having now fairly got on the track of her for whom he had so long watched in vain, and quite making up his mind to take full advantage of the lucky opportunity. But he was again doomed to disappointment. Dame Cicely, after threading a few streets, entered another ware-room of a chapman in female attire, doubtless attracted by the enticing and cunningly ticketed novelties so tastefully displayed in its windows. With an impatient gesture, her pursuer began to pace up and down the causeway, turning his head each moment in his eager

watchfulness, or, every now and then, stopping before the window to peer through the interstices left among its gay decorations, and make sure the lady had not escaped him ; till, at last, like a weary sentry impatient of his monotonous tread, he posted himself in an opposite passage, whence he could at ease observe her egress, without exciting attention.

Now, whether the articles of fantasie were more than usually attractive, the converse of the trader and his youthful attendants more brilliant than common, or the fair purchaser very difficult to please, a full hour of the clock glided by, and still she lingered. As the afternoon waned, the air became cold and damp. A chill crept through the bones of our sentinel, and his nasal organ assumed a bluish hue ; which chilliness, added to his constrained gaze and vexation, caused drops of water to distil from his eyes, and slowly to course down his lengthened visage.

“I need have the enduring resolution of my great aunt Patience,” snuffled Cackle as he drew from a receptacle in his outer garment a kerchief of real Indian hue and texture, and with it deftly wiped away the offending drops. “Ah ! for three whole months she held her tongue, and found Uncle Gab out at last : he never had a happy day afterwards. A remarkable woman ! surely, she was a remarkable woman !”

Whatever were the transcendent merits of this won-

derful female, they must further remain unknown, as her worthy kinsman's soliloquy was suddenly cut short by the appearance of his fair quarry emerging from the shop; and with a shake and a snort, as of a fiery war-horse at the sounds of battle, he rushed forth to follow on her track. Street after street was quickly left behind. They encountered fewer people as they approached the quarter of the city where stood the principal building dedicated to religious worship, towards which it now seemed that Dame Cicely was directing her steps. They passed under a time-honoured gateway leading into the small plain or square around the sacred edifice. The deepening gloom was favourable to Cackle's pursuit; he was not observed as, with stealthy, creeping pace, and keeping under the shadows of the houses on one side of the plain, he followed her to the great door of the building. She entered, and a gleam of satisfaction, spreading itself over the noble countenance of Grundy, proclaimed his success. The lady descended the steps into the church, and, with footfall light as the gentle zephyr, proceeded along the tessellated pavement of the lofty centre aisle. Cackle continued to watch her movements with intense eagerness, till she disappeared within the screened interior, where the vesper service would ere long commence. Secure of having attained his object, he lingered in the aisles to note the monuments of the illustrious dead. One

tomb especially, which could be plainly distinguished by the light of a large waxen taper, arrested his attention. It was that of the Bishop Blab already mentioned in his converse with Tobias. The bones of the venerable prelate reposed under a splendid mausoleum of Tuscan marble, on which, his crosier by his side, reclined the chiselled effigy of the pious deceased. Over it, in choice and terse Latin, were recorded the age, date of death, and deeds of this eminent churchman, Bishop Blab, who, as there duly set forth, figured rather prominently in the Crusades led by Peter the Hermit, and afterwards, returning home from his perilous pilgrimage, was presented to the see of Humdrum, where he died—so said the marble to those able to read it—in all the odour of sanctity. With pride did Cackle Grundy contemplate the monument. Nor, well knowing that detraction ever attends on greatness, was his gratification diminished when he recalled to mind a very different version of the life of the proud churchman, handed down from other sources. How it was said,—by his enemies no doubt,—that previous to his setting out for the Crusades with the Hermit, in the capacity of his confessor, little or nothing was known of him; but that he soon made himself notorious, by leading Peter such a miserable life, through his over-much talking and mischief-making, that, to get quit of him, he gladly laid hold of the pretext for sending him to England with

that famous despatch to the king, in which he relates, among other notable things, the capture of the city of Semlin by his unruly body of Crusaders; giving the following graphic description of the attack:—

“And my sturdie knaves bein much exorste wyth y^e werienesse and lengthe of y^e marche and ther throtes bein dried up and parched by y^e sultrie hetes of y^e daie diddin wyth mightie spirit and havocke spedelie deliver assoulte and make caption of a grete bricke werke edyfyce withouten y^e walles of y^e citie whiche thei in ther conceytes tooke to be a brewerie-bildin y^e thyrstie de-ceivèd soules.”

That the king, ignorant of the Trojan gift with which he was presented in the person of the friar, made him one of his father confessors. But he did not remain much longer to shrive the monarch than the Hermit; for, soon after his appointment, such quarrels, heart-burnings, and dissensions arose between the king, his attendants, and the young and old gallants and ladies of the court circle, which were traced to Friar Blab’s genius and offices — so that the king, fearing the power of the church too much, in the person of the monk, to dismiss him openly, or with the contumely he deserved, gave him the bishoprick of Humdrum, one of the most celebrated in Europe, or out. Moreover, that this bishoprick, which from its foundation had been a model of dulness, sleepiness, and peace, speedily altered its character under the reign of Bishop Blab,

and became in a short space of time a perfect Pandemonium : monks, who had dwelt together in strict amity for years, changed into most bitter enemies ; the sisters separated from each other, and remained secluded in their cells, or, if two or three gathered together, some poor nun was the sufferer in character next day. How Friar Potts, heretofore the jolliest of monks and an ornament to his monastery, shrank gradually away, his hitherto rosy cheeks becoming like unto dried biffins, and his rotund stomach collapsing into the resemblance of an empty jelly-bag. However, the bishop did not survive his elevation many years, for, shortly after affairs had reached this pitch of discomfort, he was found dead in his chair, in the episcopal chamber, with a nearly finished scroll on the table before him, in which he had detailed to the archbishop the delinquencies of a certain lay brother, Dominick Winlove by name, and a nun called Ursula, which he had discovered, and praying for chastisement on the said Dominick and Ursula. It was whispered there was some foul play in the bishop's death, as the secret postern door leading into the apartment was open, the key not to be found, and a suspicious-looking black ring appeared round the prelate's throat. His confessor, who was the first to find him in this state, was heard to mutter, after he had examined the scroll and Blab's neck, " Dominick Winlove, his mark ! " But the bishop being no fa-

vourite, and as an inquiry might only bring scandal on the church, the affair was hushed up,—an easy matter in those unquiet days, before coroner's inquests searched into such mischances. It was given out that the good man died from indigestion, after eating too heartily of stewed tench, his favourite dish. A splendid funeral was accorded to his remains, at which it was remarked the monks and friars chanted with unwonted feeling and unction. A new bishop speedily reigned in his stead: Friar Potts recovered his rosy cheeks and roundity of person; the monks and nuns once more lived in harmony; the see resumed its dulness, sleepiness, and tranquillity, and became again the "Humdrum" as of old.

Somewhat of these traditionary episcopal memoirs passed through the mind of Cackle Grundy as he gazed upon the tomb; and turning away with a proud consciousness of being no degenerate descendant of the race to which that great churchman belonged, he bent his steps towards the interior of the edifice. Sounds of low muttered prayers warned him that the service had commenced; and when, with noiseless tread, he passed within the screen, the first object on which his eye rested was the calm, passionless visage of the Stranger, as he sat occupying a place in close vicinity to Dame Cicely Target. A flush of delighted surprise at this evident realisation of his suspicions illumined for a

moment Cackle's usually cold, ash-coloured cheeks ; and with the feelings of the red savage when, hot in the pursuit, he comes suddenly on the track of his hated foe, our hero exulted, as he murmured to himself, "Aha! so, so! An assignation, then! and in this consecrated fane! But they can't escape me now; I'll track 'em home." In furtherance of which resolve, he passed through the lighted portion of the building, and ensconced himself in a well-cushioned seat near the high altar, where, shrouded in darkness, he could keep his vigil unobserved.

And there Grundy upright sat, with folded arms and glistening eyes, fixed, like those of the treacherous tiger of Bengal, upon his victim. The solemn service of the church progressed. The low responses uttered, the deep-toned prayer falling from the lips of those meek and humble expounders of the Word—true white-robed sons of the church connected with the establishment—make no impression on his heart. No feelings in unison with the service are stirred in the bosom of that stern man. His soul is in his eyes; the words are dully heard, mere sounds, falling stillborn upon his sense. And now the sweet-voiced anthem, borne from the choir, reverberates along the fretted roof, and comes soothingly in gentle cadences upon the ear. Ha! what! can this be? The charm of St. Cecilia's music operates even upon that brain. Cackle's eyes grow dim—his eyelids

droop—he nods once forward, then draws back his head, and, striving to shake off the drowsy influence, stares stupidly around; then his head reclines gently against the back of the seat on which he rests—his lower jaw has fallen—his arms unfold, relax, and hang powerless by his side, and soft sounds of tuneful melody are given from his nose.

Cackle Grundy sleeps.

*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*

The service of the church is for that day done. The high-priest and his attendant subordinates are unrobed, the choristers have silently closed their books, followed, and departed. Dame Cicely and the Stranger, mixing with the crowd of worshippers, emerge composedly from the sacred pile. The purblind, half-deaf vergers slowly, and with trembling fingers, extinguish the sacred lights. They carefully secure the inner and the outer doors, and then, with senile footsteps, and keys dangling from their feeble hands, seek their several precenthal homes.

Grundy is alone with the illustrious dead!

Seconds flow into minutes, minutes into hours, and hours into the space of time, and still he sleeps. Occasionally, mellifluous drowsy sounds rise and fall in the quiet night air, like notes of grateful harmony;

and now the clock gives out, with deep-toned voice, the tell-tale hour: ten strokes ring through the air.

Grundy sleeps soundly on.

Hark! what noise is that, disturbing for a second the silence reigning in that fane? Now all is still again: but hark, once more! It is—a sneeze! Another, and again another, quickly follow. A shivering coldness, creeping over the sleeper's frame, arouses him; he stretches out his arms, rises, and, with form drawn up erect, gives forth a mighty yawn. Unconsciously, he steps out one pace, and, stumbling against a kneeling cushion placed in front of him, falls heavily forward, and with some violence strikes his noble nose against the edge of the praying desk before him.

A smothered oath burst from Cackle's lips as, gathering himself up, he ran his fingers up and down the suffering member, which began to throb and swell in the pale moonlight struggling through the long painted windows of the edifice. A full sense of his position flashed across his mind, and he felt himself to be defeated at the very moment of victory. Vexatious ideas crowded upon him all at once, and he ground his teeth as he thought of the game, so fairly housed, having escaped him; his horse and riding dress still left at the inn; Tobias unpunished; the dismay of his household at his absence; and the ridiculous figure he should cut if found there in the morning.

“Curses on those attendant hirelings, who left me to sleep on in this damp hole!” he muttered, as he floundered into the aisle, and, feeling his way to the screen, endeavoured to obtain egress. It was securely fastened, and only shook in his grasp. He glared for an instant (after the fashion of a lion in his cage) through the gilded palisades into the dim obscurity of the nave beyond, and then slowly groped his way down a side walk in the chapel, and arrived at a small door leading into the outer body of the church, which he tried in vain to open — it was locked!

The anger pent up in him now broke forth in all its intensity, as, stepping back a pace or two and slightly lowering his magnificent head, he exclaimed with a long, fierce indrawn breath:

“Devils!” Then a run — a lifted leg — a firmly-planted and well-delivered heel upon the lock — were the work of an instant. A crash ensued, and Grundy was hurled head foremost through the opening he had made. The sounds echoed along the length of the edifice; and even Cackle, strong-nerved as he was, halted, after he had recovered his footing, and with half-averted glance looked back, while a slight shiver ran through his frame. “Obliged to do it—I couldn’t be expected to stay here all night,” he murmured gently, and in tremulous accents, under his breath. A religious awe unconsciously steals over him; and walk-

ing forward with unsteady steps, he sat down on a low tomb, his head drooping on his breast, and for some minutes appeared to be absorbed in the contemplation of the moonbeams streaming along the pavement before him. "Courage!" said Grundy, and, rising from his seat, he tapped his left breast with his hand; "I've been caught napping, of a surety, this time; but my name isn't what it is, if I don't bring it out bright and unsullied as any of our line."

With these words, he advanced up the nave, pausing for a moment opposite the tomb of Bishop Blab, in the direction of which he reverently glanced, as if to gain fresh vigour by a thought of that great man; and arrived at the great entrance to the building, he stood perfectly still. What could be the feelings then influencing and agitating that noble soul? Look into his countenance, seen in the pale moonlight. A volcano of passion lies hidden, as it were, under a bank of violets. An impassable mask is spread over that face. You would study, divine, know that man — impossible! as well endeavour to fathom the mysteries of the temple of Isis. He is beyond all compass; he stands there "the incarnation of the Grundys."

With a firm step and manly stride, he ascended the steps leading to the principal door, and laid his nervous hand upon the bar which secured it.

"Give me strength, O ancients of my race!" said

Cackle, throwing up his eyes, "and let a deed be done this night, which will rest in the records of our house to all time, and be a mark and incentive to the youth to come hereafter." Then, with strong arms and great force, he tugged at the bar for some minutes. Vain efforts! It would not yield an inch, and he released his grasp and retreated down the steps again into the body of the cathedral.

Stretching his legs apart, he glared at the opposing obstacle to his freedom, and several times shut and opened his hands; and at last, clenching them firmly together, drawing a deep breath, he threw himself, with fresh impetuosity, upon the opposing barrier.

No, Grundy, no! Hadst thou the concentrated strength of all thy ancestry, hadst thou the prowess of an hundred paladins of old, thou couldst not stir that bar. Fashioned by a cunning workman, versed well in the mysteries and secrets of his art, it was his masterpiece, his legacy to the pious purposes of his native city. Grundy, with all thy dexterity and strength, it calls itself thy master.

A third time Cackle returned to his task. With one foot firmly planted on the cold pavement, and his knee forced against the massive oak, he, with body almost doubly bent, and indrawn breath, put forth his utmost power. Oh! joy to his heart! It creaks — it yields. Delusive hope! vain dream! It is but the

stitches of some part of his habiliments giving way and rending at the straining of their wearer. Again—a last effort—as, with lips closed and teeth firmly set, he called forth all the reserve of his strength, and in desperation applied it to effect his purpose. The bar stood like a rock—he panted and paused.

“My curses rain on those old vergers!” gasped forth Grundy. “If I’m found here in the morning in this condition—I am for ever—humiliated—and—dis—graced;” and slowly retreating from the door, he sank——

[*The rest of the MS. is lost.*]

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